

THE DIAL

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A GLANCE AT THE SOUL OF JAPAN

BY PAUL CLAUDEL

Translated From the French by Lillian Chamberlain

WHEN I was asked by my friend, Goraï, collaborator with Professor Michel Revon in the compilation of that admirable *Anthologie de la Littérature Japonaise* (which never leaves my work-table) to discuss the subject of French tradition, I said that I was not quite equal to the task. It is almost as difficult to speak of one's country as of one's self. Between the impression which we have of ourselves and that which we make upon sincere and unbiassed persons who have come expressly to study us, there is a difference which the books of travellers permit us to savour in all its piquancy. And while it is easy to accuse them of naïveté or malice, is it quite certain that they are always in the wrong, and that we only are irrefutable witnesses of ourselves? For the most part, to tell the truth, people act without being really conscious of what they are doing, they are not actuated by reasonable and definite motives which they could instantly explain, but by habit, by instinctive, extemporized response to the impulsions of circumstance, duty, necessity—by an empirical application of instruction accepted without question and acted upon without reflection. We inhabit a certain corner of nature and society as we inhabit our bodies—in the same naïve, comfortable, ignorant, animal way—and when we are invited by a direct question or false inference to explain this or that action, are subject to confusion or offence much as if we had been asked to justify our eyes or nose. It has to be so because it *is* so, and we cannot visualize the pictorial,

NOTE: An address before the students of the University of Nikko.

pristine effect that we have on strangers. They alone can distinguish what is characteristic, special, and at times unique in an act or mode of behaviour, a mental attitude which seems to us natural and inevitable. A native, however, again has the advantage when he attempts to understand reasons for the often bizarre and disconcerting effect which he makes upon visitors. As throwing light on it he has in his possession a rich store of archives, of incidents, and of data, which afford him in relation to himself, somewhat the outside disinterested position of critic, and at the same time, a sort of intuitiveness and sympathy which enable him retroactively to prolong for his consideration the experiences of his forefathers and ancestors, very much as if their life were his own. It is this experience, short, long, conscious or unconscious—that we call national tradition. You have more direct access to it than is afforded in the briefs of our country or in a few arbitrarily selected illustrations. Entrance to this most intimate tribunal of our national mind, to this sort of continual parliament where all litigation is carried on, where all cases are heard and all judgements are rendered, this supreme record which enters into all our legal proceedings, all our intellectual customs, is our language. The French language is at once the most perfect product and most incontrovertible certificate of our national tradition. It has been the chief means of building up a people comprising twenty distinct races, from the residue of I know not how many invasions and migrations following one upon the other. Arrived at this land's end, brought up short against the European jetty, these peoples found themselves compelled to establish between their distinctive strata and cross-sections, a solidarity, an accord which the land also imposed upon them. Though ethnologically diverse, France is one and indivisible geographically, and counsels to disruption are less puissant by far than are the necessities for concentration. There could be among the French none but spiritual controversies, and to the intellect alone could the task of reconciliation be confided. Every citizen of this chance variform assemblage which had emerged from the ruins of the Roman Empire and the moraines of Barbary thus found himself inclined to become an orator, a diplomat, a jurist. He was led to seek in general and enduring forces underlying special fortuities, an explanation of the existence of the nation. Add that geographically France is not the slave of fixed conditions, is not committed indefinitely to a repetition of the same course of action, but is so

situated that nothing of general import can take place in the occident without involving her. And she must continually arrange her affairs in such a way as to balance conditions, modifying them at times by inducing, at times by arresting action, always counterbalancing some element in the general situation. To solve the new problems with which he was constantly being confronted the Frenchman had need not so much of empiricism as of a general principle for forming judgements. Our longest war, the Hundred Years' War, was but a juridic debate punctuated with appeals to arms. That France should have been placed by providence at the intersection of all continental interests precludes the possibility of rigidly prescribing her destiny or of arbitrarily setting limits for her. Law must intervene. The treaties of Westphalia and Utrecht and the acts of Vienna and Versailles were not mere redistributions of territory, they were above all, formulated principles of which the new map divisions were but a consequence. And what is true of our foreign policies is equally true of our domestic ones. Each Frenchman, . . . heir of twenty miscellaneous races, has always constituted—to himself—a little sovereignty carrying on a continual diplomatic and judicial interchange of thought and feeling with neighbouring sovereignties, under the authority of a sort of scattered but all-powerful tribunal called Opinion. From this fact arises not only the importance we attach to literature and to language, but also that thing so characteristically essential to both—whether it be prose or poetry, whether concerned with psychology or description—the passionate desire for accuracy. We are always explaining, and explaining ourselves. The desire with us to perfect the language and make it efficient has been not merely the ambition of a few highly cultured persons, but a matter of great practical importance; we could not too highly esteem and cherish the chief instrument of our national unity which, in the course of a continually open debate, has permitted us to take cognizance of our permanent mission and successive obligations. Thus was established little by little, this habitual attitude of the Frenchman to life, having for its main characteristic, inclination for discussion. He is by nature a jurist, in every instance his instinct is to seek causes and, if I may be permitted to play on words, also to plead them (since the same term with us is used to designate the explanation of a thing's existence and the legal process by which is established one's right to it). In France literature has not been the

expression of a few exceptional minds; it has been rather the necessity of an entire race, the uninterrupted means of communication between its different geographical divisions, conducive to mastering every new problem brought forward. Every Frenchman has always had the sense of speaking before a tribunal of experts, any one of whom was qualified to ask him to explain every word.

It is one of these Frenchmen whose mental attitude I have been trying to give an idea of, who would bring his still naïve testimony, before reflection and habit have had time to distort and blunt it. . . . Pilgrim of many journeys, it was but yesterday that he disembarked on this shore which for so many years had enriched his mental horizon. And having once passed the utilitarian zone in which the everyday needs of humanity are supplied in Japan as elsewhere by the same apparatus of machinery and buildings, he immediately finds himself face to face with a country which is not, like so many countries in Europe or America, a simple agricultural or industrial enterprise, the inn of a day or a night, patronized without special intention or thought—but an hereditary domain the significance of which is less the practical convenience of its immediate occupants than the composing of a solemn and instructive spectacle. Everything Japanese from the outline of a mountain to that of a hairpin or a *saké* bowl is in conformity with a single style. In order to discover Japanese tradition it is not necessary, as in the case of the French, to penetrate to that intimate tribunal in which ideas arise and mental attitudes make trial of their strength; there is nothing to do but open eyes and ears to this irresistible concert about us to which each generation must in turn tune its instruments and voice.

Let us listen, but in order to hear we must first create silence. Music begins only where noise ceases. Let this confused tumult of velleity and words subside in us. If I were one of your mystic pilgrims, I should induce this by having an ancient ritual prayer recited over me and should surrender myself to the benediction of the little brush which confers purity and contemplativeness. Here I am, one of the followers in the train of a certain personage in your literature, the poetess Murasaki, or the bonze Kennko, who persuades me to tread silently in the path of mysteries. It seems to me I hear the rustle of noble silk or the click of the chaplet against the alms-bowl. I follow an endless alley of enormous cedars with coloured trunks which lose themselves in black velvet; a fierce ray

of sunlight sears with lightning stroke an indecipherable inscription on a stone pillar. The windings of the strange road serve to evade demons and to separate me for ever from a profane world. Over a coral arch I cross a jade pool (is it this pool which by a fugitive gleam of light between the motionless pads of the lotus, will discover to me my invisible companions?). Shadowed by the centuries I pour upon my hands from a sebilla, water so piercing, so cold, that I am born again. Behind the closed door I listen for the bell tolling slowly as though meditating; a waxlight burns, and below in the chaos of leaves I hear the voice of the cuckoo answering the liturgy of the cascade.

And it is here I perceive the distinctively Japanese attitude to life to be that which for lack of better equivalent—French does not offer great resources for expressing this sentiment—I shall call reverence, respect, free acceptance of an exaltation too great for the intellect, the sinking of personality in circumambient mystery, the sense of an enveloping presence which makes incumbent upon one a measured decorum. It is not for nothing that Japan has been called the land of Kami, and this traditional characterization . . . seems to me the most perfect that has been achieved. Japan is like a dense bank of clouds on the bosom of a boundless ocean. Its jagged shores, its inner harbours, its mysterious openings are to the sailor a continual surprise. Its mountainous framework constitutes not only one of the most complex formations in the world, but one disturbed by mysterious convulsions, the precarious nature of which is attested by the tremors which still agitate the unstable soil. It is like a stage-setting which the mechanics have just left, the back-drop and wings still shaking a little. The plains of Japan are among the most populous parts of the world, but certain mountainous districts, vast tracts of veritable jungle recalling the tropics, are still as uninhabited as at the day of Creation. On every side, nothing but valleys, folded and refolded; forests blacker than night, inextricable tangles of reeds, ferns, and bamboos. Over it all, and at some seasons almost continuously, descends a curtain of rain; here wander those strange vapours of which ancient and modern Japanese painters have with such sovereign result availed themselves, vapours which by turns hide and disclose as though on purpose corners of the landscape, as if someone wished to call them to our attention and expose for a moment their occult significance. And above the whole country, dominating plain and mountain, sea

and island, the most majestic altar as it were, that Nature ever raised to her Creator—a landmark thousands of years old, worthy to commemorate the spot where the Sun after speeding far over watery wastes, prepares to engage in the human phase of its activity—rises the heroic form of Fuji.¹

Thus to whichever side one directs his glance, he finds himself surrounded with veils which open only to close again, with silent awe-inspiring retreats to which there are long winding paths like those of an initiation ceremony, with funereal shades, with strange objects—an old tree-trunk, a stone worn by water, like indecipherable sacred documents—with perspectives which discover themselves to him only through rock porticoes or colonnades of trees. All nature is a temple prepared for worship. In Japan there are none of those great rivers, none of those vast plains with gradually ascending sky-lines, which entice the dreamer and invite the spirit to endless voyaging. At each step the imagination is arrested as it were by the fold of a screen and an arranged perspective, the hidden meaning of which bespeaks the homage of his attention. The artist or hermit need only mark it by a Shinto gate-way or a lantern, or a splendid temple, or by erecting a simple stone. But it is never the edifice, however gilded, which seems to me to be as in Europe, its soul. It is a casket, a censer placed obscurely to induce a consciousness of the great solemnity of nature, and so to speak objectify it. Like these few characters or brush-strokes, with a vermilion seal added, which the poet or artist disposes on a sheet of white paper.

While the European of to-day sees in his environment a realm merely calculated to contribute to his comfort or profit, without doubt to the traditional Japanese, Creation is first of all the work of God, still permeated with divine influences; and since in Japan one does not enter the home of the humblest peasant without removing one's shoes, with what reverence ought not mortals to comport themselves in approaching the parvis before the abode of Higher Powers, privileged by them to use it in common with them? Repeating what I said a moment ago, just as temples here seem not to have been built with a deliberate purpose but rather in answer to the latent prayer of the landscape, thickening by art the dense forest shade, as here in sacred Nikko; guiding the voices of these ever-flowing waters; rendering permanent on the black of the

¹ In Japan a man need not pray; the very soil is divine. Hitomara.

foliage the gold and scarlet of a ray of sun; imprisoning the thunder under a bronze bell; repeating and making more solemn by the upward flight of porticoes and stairways, an ascending earth; reiterating by their avenues of giant witnesses the reticent appeal of the sanctuary; so in the same way, what else do their crowds of pilgrims venerate—those pilgrims who with an affecting zeal, do not cease to throng these temples?—what do they worship behind the ever lowered curtains? A mirror as it were reflecting heaven, a drop of the primordial Waters, the name of saint or ancestor carved on a tablet, something confounded with night—above all, night itself, that mystery upon which the naïve heart piously meditates.

I have been struck forcibly by the fact that as expressions of Buddhism during the primitive period in Japan, at Nara for example, one sees numbers of very beautiful statues. Later, and in proportion as Japan had time to impose her own character on the imported religion, these set representations became more and more rare. They withdrew into denser and denser shade until finally, in modern times, they have neither form nor voice.

It is something quite invisible in the sacred cave that they are trying to reach—this humble woman who claps her hands two or three times, this group of mystics who cast a handful of pennies into the box, this little girl who climbs the temple steps uncertainly and wakens the bronze frog at the end of the thrice-twisted cotton rope.

The supernatural in Japan is then nothing but nature, is literally supernature, that region of superior reality in which brute fact is metamorphosed into meaning. It does not contradict law but rather emphasizes the mysteriousness of it. The whole purport of religion is to induce humility and silence in the presence of that which is everlasting. The patriotism of the Japanese accordingly seems to me above all, unbroken communion with his country—that is to say, poignant contemplation of the face of nature. Among the crowds of voluntary pilgrims at all the noted scenic spots, nothing could be more striking than the long file of school-children whom their masters are conducting to a special point that they in turn may receive the impression by which so many generations have been influenced. This attitude of reverence and ceremony has here become a habit of the soul, not only upon visiting spots signalized as privileged seats of divine influence but in the presence of all

created beings who are, like us, the work of one father and the revelation of his will. The relationship expresses itself in gesture and ceremonial. I recall how, upon an early visit to Kyoto, as I walked in one of the beautiful gardens which are the charm of that incomparable city, a great pine that I saw stirred me, penetrating my consciousness; it was almost ready to fall, but was supported by a sort of enormous crutch that someone had piously fitted to it. This tree seemed to me not merely what it would be to an American or European—a mine of boards, a mute thing in the landscape—but a live being, a sort of vegetable grandfather to whom someone had lent filial assistance. Nothing is commoner than to see a tree of unusual proportions or a distinctively shaped rock encircled with a strand of sacred rice straw and thus placed among things Kami, testifying to the attention visitors have bestowed on it and to their gratitude for its existence. When a household pet has died, it is carried to the temple where the *nembutsu* is recited over it by the bonze; no life however humble is, in disappearing, too valueless for religious commitment. A merchant, a seller of rat-poison, will commemorate by a service, rodents his product has destroyed; and a stationer, old brushes which are past usefulness. Finally and prettiest of all—I read the other day in a newspaper that the wood-engravers' association of Tokyo had engaged in a ceremony to honour the cherry-trees whose substance they had used in their art.

It is this reverent, worshipful feeling—a kindly, tender fellowship with the world of creatures—in which the secret of Japan's art consists. It is striking that in appreciating the products of it, our taste has long been at variance with that of Japan. We prefer the engravings and paintings of the Ukigoye school, looked upon in Japan as of a rather decadent period, but one for which I may be pardoned for having, personally, kept my first enthusiasm: it admits of a strong, stately, dramatic, brilliant, witty, picturesque, infinitely varied and animated rendering of familiar sights, man in his customary setting and employments being given chief place in it. Whereas the trend of Japanese taste is toward antiquity—pictures from which man is absent for the most part or is present only in monastic equivalent, as immobile nearly as the trees and stones. A carp, a monkey hanging from a branch, a few flowers, a landscape with level superimposed above level, which a master brush has painted with strokes as definite as handwriting—such are the things presented for the most part on these priceless kakemonos

recovered from the depths of the past by their happy possessors and unrolled before us with infinite care. And sometimes just at first, we barbarians, who feel that we must be surprised and entertained, have a sense of disappointment. We lack the humility which would permit the soul to be affectionately united to this tender shoot beginning to quicken, to this potent stroke of the tail of the fish rising from the dusky slime into regions of aquatic light. It is but gradually we perceive that life itself is before us in this delightful suppleness, this exactitude, this exquisite suspension of movement which, for instance, directs and informs this monkey from the points of his claws to the tip of his tail (it is not a monkey in motion, but motion become monkey), this savant, naïve choice of treatment, this patient contemplation joined to lightning rapidity of hand, this rigidly austere suppressing of unnecessary alien elements; it is no longer art but life itself, in action, which is disclosed to you, more divine by reason of its anonymity. Observe this trivial fraction of life which, thanks to the devout unselfative artist, has become alive for all time. And even as the grand seigneurs of former days preferred to gold and crystal vases a simple earthen bowl to which the potter had imparted the resilience of flesh and the brightness of dew, so in striving to express the eternal, these great artists, often priests, have painted not only gods and symbols but things the most fragile and ephemeral, the most pristine stirring of the ineffable source, a bird, a butterfly, less: an opening flower, a falling leaf. By the magic point of a brush this has been so ordained. The very thing is here before us, alive and immortal, its transitoriness henceforth indestructible.

So evident is this to me that I shall not labour the manner in which a reverence so deep in the heart of the Japanese, has come to determine the modalities of their ordinary life. The nature of the tie between the nation and their sovereign is well known; it is not exaggeration, moreover, to say that in ancient Japanese society, all human relationships of family, clan, and corporation, were obedient to the dictates of an all but sacred ritual. In no country has the Confucian principle of seemly behaviour been more generally or more nobly exemplified. If indeed something of mystery and divinity be attributed to inanimate objects, how much more appropriately would it pertain to man. Japanese grammar yields itself to variations of time and circumstance, and to degrees of respect and formality required by the dignity of the speaker and

of the persons addressed, and of the occasion in question. It is marked by an hereditary politeness which I truly hope the Japanese will never lose despite the bad examples set them.¹ It is always a surprise to us occidentals to see one coachman salute another pleasantly in passing as though to apologize, instead of reviling him as would be the case in London or Paris. Can you imagine a chauffeur who, like the chauffeur of one of my Tokyo colleagues, goes weekly to burn incense at the tomb of the forty-seven Ronins? It is moreover the personal consciousness in each man, of something sacred and inviolable which explains the extreme nature of Japan's ancient code of honour. When the inmost sanctuary of his personality had suffered insult, a man had to disappear or cause his insulter to disappear. Finally, I detect this mystic instinct, this sanctity even in the sensibility which informs profound feelings and emotions, in the very care even, with which objects that you hold dear are concealed—even in the complicated art of boxes and multiple envelopes in which presents, purchases, and small domestic treasures are cunningly clothed and dissembled. Regarding this little thesis as no more than a surface enquiry into psychology, as but a tentative summing-up, I shall close with what illustrates as it seems to me the way in which Japanese religious feeling has something in common with that of humanity as a whole. I am reading with much admiration and benefit, the reminiscences of a man who has devoted his life to serving the poor, who lives among beggars and prostitutes in one of the most wretched quarters of Kobe, and I borrow from him to make myself clear to you. He writes, after having been converted to Christianity, that what made the strongest impression on him in the teachings of the gospel was the commandment not merely to love one's neighbour but also to honour him. Not only ought we to love creatures the most degraded spiritually and materially, but also to value and honour them as being, like us, the creatures, the living temples of Divinity. They, even more than we, bear the special mark of his hand (like this pine twisted into the supplicating attitude of a paralytic!). Nothing is more Christian than this sublime sentiment, and I rejoice to believe, more characteristically and profoundly Japanese.

¹ The profound, oft repeated reverences, set off by words and glances, with which Loti diverts himself in *Madame Chrysanthemum*, testify to the satisfaction we experience in penetrating further and further the identity of those we meet. They give time for preparation, for the adjusting of our hearts, *siaosin* in the Chinese proverb.

There remains for me but to glance back with you over the landscape we have been regarding, and to conclude with a consideration of certain prospects which the future holds out to us.

It seems to me that at the foundation of the traditional Japanese soul is respect—a subordinating of personality to the object considered, deferent recognition of the life and of the things which surround one. Religion in Japan has not thus far been the worship of a transcendent Being, but is specifically associated with nature and with that society in which it exists; and although it resembles the religions of India and China in that it is without belief in a precise revelation from the other world, it differs profoundly from both. The Indian is essentially a contemplative, meditating continually on the same thing—a verdure eternally non-existent, ever hiding and ever hidden. The Chinese, distributed over the greatest fertile tract of land on the face of the earth has been preoccupied for the most part with regulating the individual's relations to his fellow-man, with the formulating of moral and practical laws enabling brothers to divide an inheritance of land and water without violence or recourse to law. The Japanese belongs to an isolated unit that has shown throughout centuries its ability to forgo contact with the rest of the world. His country is a kind of sanctuary built and adorned, in which he watches a brilliant, significant ceremonial, progress throughout successive rites, from one year's end to the next, from January snows till the shoots make their way up out of the earth under the warm rain of the *nynbai*, from April's exhalations of the rose to autumn's conflagration. Life for him is participation in this august calendar as the child of an ancient family takes part in the traditional anniversaries of the household. He allies himself with nature rather than subjugates it, adjusts his life to her ceremonial, observes her, follows her, renders her speech and her detail more perfect; their lives intermingle. In no country is there more acute understanding between man and nature, or a more evident reciprocal imprint. For two centuries they have but contemplated each other. May one not hope that this communion shall endure and that its teaching to the rest of humanity shall not fail, that alien buildings, commonplace and unrelated to the ground on which they stand, shall not—like the howls of slaves and of the damned—drown with discord the music of these enchanted isles? As often as I return to France I note with chagrin the growth of a vile invention, a scourge worse than

phylloxera, which is destroying the beauty of our landscape: I refer to the machine-made tile, a thing of artificial and rigid aspect like the soul of a serf, whose strident red is replacing the beautiful tapestry of faded purple like Bokhara wool, the honourable old roofing of Champagne and Provence. Introduced into the most harmonious landscape, a single touch of this insolent, inexpugnable carmine is enough to ruin every other effect like an imbecile's laugh shattering orchestral harmony. So, in Japan also, unless means are found to check these pernicious materials, I fear that re-enforced concrete and zinc may work like havoc. According to an old Chinese superstition, the *fong shui*, natural harmony cannot be impaired with impunity, and should nature be travestied or its form and meaning effaced, human beings in that dishonoured region will be exposed to every malign influence. I hope there may never be such a day for Japan, and that peaceful union of man and earth will endure through the ages, as in the words of your national hymn, "like the moss on the rock."

N. E. LANDSCAPE

BY MARSHALL SCHACHT

Now to this rusty field
crows gather, and the autumn yield
is lost in smoke.
What once was oak
is nothing but the memory of oak,
a song upon a reed,
a fallen star, the windy seed
of the milkweed flower
that winds devour
in fields that speak the language Lazarus spoke.



WOODCUT. BY MAX WEBER



MAX WEBER

WOODCUT. BY MAX WEBER

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THIRD DECLAMATION

BY KENNETH BURKE

COMING upon the rock, we likened it to a gun-boat, or to the crust of some enormous pre-historic turtle, and climbed aboard this monster's kindly back to ride statically through the woods of hickory and oak, and among the scattering of lesser boulders. I, in this early springtime, had not yet learned to distrust the seasonal promises which lead us to mistake exaltation for futurity, and which fulfil themselves not in renewals of our life's texture, not in metaphysical disclosures to correspond with metaphysical whisperings, not in the quickening sap of changed relationships, but solely in the delicacies and amenities of arbutus, liverwort, and violets protruding through the fallen leaves. I have since found good cause to meet this graceful season with sullenness. Yet I am not one to turn with over-promptness against the uplift of receptivity. I can tolerate in advance that man whom I am later to call a fool; I can make allowance in the abstract for those whom I shall despise in the particular. And I have always striven to maintain as much of nobility as resides in the contemplation of it. Like an earnest woman in pregnancy, I have observed beautiful forms and colours, and listened carefully to harmonious sound, in the hope that such experiences might somehow become incorporate in me and pleasantly affect my issue. And if I now refuse to consider the problematical, it is because the certainty of grimness is preferable to the possibility of disappointment—if I stickle for better prices on Tuesday, it is as one who on Monday bared his breast to the elements.

You and I had not yet taken our trip together, on this day I spent with Florence in the woods. We did not yet have reason to suspect that the subsequent months would prove so favourable to you and so disastrous to myself. We knew that you were at the theatre, reciting your lines as Alcaeus with sporadic energy, waving your right hand as you would later wave it before the audience, while consulting from time to time the still unmemorized script which you held in your left. Surely, of all those details which

conspired to assist you, this casting in the part of Alcaeus was among the most momentous. It endowed you with a character which you could profitably project beyond the limits of the fiction into your own actual situation. And when on the night of the *première*, the emotions of the audience brought freshness to your repeated lines, I soon discovered that it was not you, but Alcaeus, who walked among us after the curtain had fallen. Even had we not been predestined as enemies, this incident would have remained an oddity between us. I did, it is true, defend you; I could still forgive you laughingly, but with such readiness that I allowed my resentment to continue.

Long after the theatre was closed, and when we had carried our conventional celebrating to the point of ribaldry, you retained your vicarious dignity, and tossed off your glass with the defiance of the Grecian in the play. And thus incited, Florence too prolonged her part as Mary, and sat drinking humbly among us as none less than the Mother of God. The bar-maids and kitchen scullions and manservants and apprentices, all those who had provided the background of obscenity to this theme of intense moral effort, were still moving about in their costumes—and this was enough, with their drunken jests and singing which they had no need of borrowing from their roles, to repeat in reality the scene which you and she had enacted upon the stage. Here was religion for the godless, the inverted piety of distorting the sacred legends, the profane worship of those last pillars of the faith who painted the image of Christ upon their feet that they might blaspheme him in walking.

And the momentousness in the retaining of these roles came not from the characters themselves, but from the fate to which they had been subjected. Implicit in your mimicry, was the determination to duplicate the plot as well. When the aged Joseph, with his difficult code of purity, has learned the full import of Alcaeus' tirades, has learned that a different avowal of ethical convictions must necessarily entail a divergent scheme of conduct, and that this Hellenic poet has refused to recognize the barriers of an Hebraic household, we understand the marriage of tetragrammaton and Artemis which was transmitted to the West; with Joseph we see that Mary has been refined by something more subtle than abstention, by exposure to vacillation between opposites, by reverence for

both Joseph and Alcaeus at once—so that he may still, when the Wise Men appear at the incunabula of this new faith, confirm them in their worship, while himself compelled to do homage to a secondary, and more mental, aspect of virginity. The playwright who could conceive devotion under this guise, could also readily entertain its dramatic counterpart—so that as Joseph prophesies (a *vaticinium post eventum* in which he foresees broadly the whole of Europe's history under the Christian exaltation) the vulgar supernumeraries enter, and begin their dalliance about the edges of the stage, while Joseph, Mary, and Alcaeus stand apart, untouched—and thus the curtain may fall upon a tableau of contrasted austerity and coarseness. What more, I ask you, was needed to bring together two who had borrowed their characters from these sources, what more was needed to give them that illusion of splendour which could make their idyll inimitable?

With a few fallen branches, as dry and brittle as chalk, and some dead leaves gathered from the crevices, I made us a bedding, where we half reclined and talked. The snow still lay about in irregular patches, like spots of sunshine filtering through the crowns of the trees in midsummer. Also, a few of last year's leaves were clinging to the oaks—and it was these leaves now which began to rustle, first far off in the valley under a slow breeze which came upon us a full minute in arrears of its own sound. So that we heard this rustling in other areas while the woods about us were still motionless; thus warned, we could observe the crackling foliage pass from its initial interrupted twitchings into a state of vigorous commotion. The tops of the trees then yielded, each after its fashion, and the woods were now beset by a miniature fury which was so thorough, so all-pervasive, that it even caught at the hem of our coats, suggesting to me in the general flurry the thought that I might, with mock-possessiveness, act as though shielding her in some grave onslaught. We peered studiously into the vacant forest as the breeze dropped away, and everything again became silent, leaving no echo but that in our own minds.

I have rehearsed such miniature cycles as of that day, such minor episodes of ebb and flow which, if our life were a scrapbook, could be cut out and pasted upon a page for myself and others to turn back upon, just as I have kept with me a picture of that boulder where we sat. Oh Florence, oh Anthony, call me Florentinus,

call me Antonine, as Cato the Younger was called *Uticensis* for having put an end to his existence at Utica.

For I have never consented to console myself with the thought that we may be rich in spirit while tangibly impoverished. Wealth—wealth in love, money, the admiration of oneself and others—is indispensable to those who would surround themselves with the flatterings and stimulations of beauty. Let any one, I repeated in self-admonition, who feels that he possesses some elect and distinguished insight, make efforts to procure its replica in material property. For were we to live sufficiently in the past or the future, or in the contemplation of remote ideas, the present could rot without our protest or even our notice, so that our pretensions to order and repose would be disproved by the repugnance which we should arouse in others. And in resigning ourselves to deprivations, we make philosophy but another word for envy. Accordingly, I felt that I must acquire much more to retain even that which I already had, as one who would strive for millions to avoid starvation.

There was, in these subsequent months, when I watched the structure of your happiness being erected out of the timbers, the steel and marble, of my despair, one man who felt towards you as I myself, and we found each other with quick understanding, on the first occasion of our meeting. He was a sickly and unsightly creature, a mouse-faced man who chewed briskly, and whose enmity of you was cheapened by being part of a more general aversion. He hated his employer, his clients, and in particular all laughter which possessed the unthinking ebullience of health. His hostility, despite its constancy, was a blunt and undiscerning thing, and thus could be content with the scantest of documents. Indeed, in time it came to serve me not as a corroboration, but as rebuttal—and when he had accepted my statements against you, he felt authorized to share them with me like truths which we had enunciated in common, so that I found them no longer of validity and was compelled to seek new justice for my complaints. For how many weeks did I support this unseemly alliance, prompted by no motive but the fear of relinquishing it? But when, in his zeal as my colleague, he attempted to expand the field of his denigrations by including Florence as well, I found the release for which I

had been seeking, and tore at him like a fiend, so that we parted company for ever.

Yet I would not have you think that I have been wholly devoid of mastery. I do praise that niggardly configuration of the stars whereby I was enabled partially to deflect my frustrations into my dealings with another. I do glorify my fate that others thought her lovely, and her loyalty could thus yield me some portion of honour. What comfort to see gladness in her moist, doglike eyes; what harsh solace to feel her creep against me in petition! Nor was it an unfair contract. In her I nurtured sinister refinements of which, since she was contented and cheerful by nature, she would have been otherwise incapable. What harm have I done in bringing anguish into a life which was so well able to surmount it, and even to profit by it? Even in trickery and neglect, I knew how to value her, never forgetting that a woman of less delicacy would have been harder to deceive, and that one of no reveries could have added nothing to replace those lacunae in her knowledge of me which I purposely left open. For though she thought of me as unyielding, I had constantly made concessions to her—never revealing to her the details of my difficulties, consistently relying upon her to imagine such causes as would do best credit to myself, and remaining vague that she might lavish her charity upon me unoffended. You, Genevieve, if at times of a summer evening, when the sun is setting beyond the orchard, and the mist and the indeterminate night sounds are arising, you go out to walk through the greenish, sea-like woods, I know that the corrosion of your melancholy is not intense, and that it is pure of my own untiring rancours. I know that you walk in sweetness, who believe unquestioningly in moral obloquy, and believe that I have impressed such upon you. As one carves his initials in a tree, so you will bear the mark of me perpetually—and for this also I am grateful. Yes, let life be dogged and weighted down by rigid scruples, that affection, in destroying such resistances, may prove itself imperious.

ENGLISH APHORISMS

BY LOGAN PEARSALL SMITH

III

AFTER Blake we return with Hazlitt to the flat earth again, and to the realm of reason; we listen again to that chorus of voices which, since before the time of Ecclesiastes, has been crying 'Vanity, all is vanity' in our ears. Hazlitt was in many ways as disillusioned as Dr Johnson, but he was, as Johnson was not, bitter and sardonic, and he hated rather than loved his fellow human beings. But his zest for life was even greater than that of Johnson, or was nourished at least by a wider variety of pleasures; the joys of solitude, of walking, of travel, of outdoor life and physical exertion added for him an intoxicating taste to the bitter draught of experience. And Hazlitt, though no poet, breathed the enchanted atmosphere of the great age of poetry in which he lived, while Rousseau, of whom he was a fervent disciple, had opened his eyes to the strange and deeply-coloured beauty of the world which shone about him. He was a painter, too, and no one could derive a greater joy from a picture or a lovely landscape. 'The contemplation of truth and beauty is the proper object for which we were created, which calls forth the most intense desires of the soul, and of which it never tires'—a sentence like this, which would have sounded like cant in the eighteenth-century ears of Dr Johnson, was nevertheless the expression of what was no mere aspiration, but the essential reality of a life otherwise so sordid, so acrid and unhappy.

Another romantic element in Hazlitt's nature, which would also have seemed like cant to Dr Johnson, was his passionate love of liberty; his hope, in spite of his knowledge of 'that toad-eating animal, man' for a reign of kindness and reason which might be ultimately established on the earth. His cry 'O Reason! when will thy long minority expire?' is a genuine expression of this hope which he still cherished, although he well knew that, as he put it, 'if mankind had wished for what is right, they might have had it

long ago.' Hazlitt, unlike Johnson, was a deliberate writer of aphorisms,¹ and a careful student of this form of literary art. In 1823 he published anonymously a volume of them entitled 'Characteristics; in the Manner of Rochefoucault's Maxims.' He had been so struck, he tells us, in the perusal of these French aphorisms, by the force and beauty of the style and matter, that he felt an earnest desire to embody some occasional thoughts of his own in the same form; and having written a few, both the novelty and the agreeableness of the task impelled him forward. In addition to the *Characteristics*, he also printed in various magazines three other collections. Hazlitt, like other authors with the aphoristic gift, enriched all his writings, his essays, and his *Life of Napoleon*, with such an abundance of terse sayings, that were they all put together, they would probably exceed in number those of any other English writer with the exception of Dr Johnson. Their quality is on the whole a high one; although they seldom possess that occasional surprise of diction which delights us in so many of Johnson's sayings, and are lacking also in the stamp of his warm and human character, they are often terse and profound and pointed, and unlike Johnson, he often makes use of the 'turn' to give them wings. 'It is the business of reviewers to watch poets, not of poets to watch reviewers'; 'there is a pleasure in madness which none but madmen know'—phrases like these recall the aphorisms of his French masters, or those of Chesterfield, their other English pupil. Hazlitt also reminds us of French aphorists like Chamfort in the occasional bitterness, the almost vitriolic quality of some of his aphorisms; old friendships, he says, are like stale food, 'the stomach turns against them.' 'We grow tired,' he says again, 'of everything but turning others into ridicule, and congratulating ourselves on their defects.'

After Hazlitt Emerson is the next, and with one exception, the last great aphorist who has written in English. Emerson's notebooks are full of detached thoughts and intuitions—the berries and wild fruit, as he called them, which he found in his basket after endless rambles in the New England woods and meadows. When

¹ Dr Johnson had however planned, among other schemes he never carried out, making a collection of 'Maxims, Characters, and Sentiments, after the manner of Bruyère, collected out of ancient authours, particularly the Greek, with Apophthegms.' (*Life*, IV, p. 382.)

he came to write an essay or address, he would turn to these note-books for ideas and phrases more or less relevant to the subject he had chosen. His essays are, therefore, like Bacon's, a mosaic of detached thoughts and aphorisms; they are not organized compositions, but glimpses of truth, as he described them; flashes of light followed by obscurity, and then another flash; each sentence, as he said himself, an infinitely repellent particle. The interest and value of his writings is to be found therefore in these clearly-cut medallions of thought, these brief and pregnant phrases.

With the exception of Halifax, Emerson is the only writer in our language who has given his best care and attention to the detached—and the detachable—sentence; he is a master of the polished and perfected phrase. For all his decorum, benevolence, and apparent mildness, Emerson, like other aphorists, was also caustic and keen-sighted, and often drew upon that accumulated store of disillusion which this way of writing seems best fitted to express. 'A person seldom falls sick, but the bystanders are animated with a faint hope that he will die'; 'We do not quite forgive a giver. The hand that feeds us is in some danger of being bitten'—sentences like these read like some of the most cynical of La Rochefoucauld's maxims. But to write of Emerson as a cynic and pessimist would be absurdly to misrepresent him. He could dip his pen in the blackest ink, because he was not, he said, afraid of falling into the inkpot. His spirit was loving and benevolent; his disillusion and ironic observation were softened, and sometimes too much softened, by his idealism and ignorance of evil; and although he found that there was a crack in everything God had made, and some foible in every man, however saintly, he put his conclusions in terms with so much humaneness in their daring, that they seem to add more to the gaiety than to the sadness of the human spectacle. In the sentence 'Let us treat men and women well: treat them as if they were real: perhaps they are,' he expressed both his disillusion and his tolerance for human beings—'chafed and irritable creatures with red faces' that we are.

As an aphorist Emerson ranks more with Blake than with any of our other writers of thoughts and maxims; in his sayings, as in Blake's, we find at its richest the imaginative quality of the English aphorism. 'We think our civilisation near its meridian, but we are only at the cockcrow and the morning star'—this and other

characteristic phrases are luminous with a kind of poetic radiance, less brilliant than the flashing sunlight of Blake's genius, but more serene, more like the illumination of the stars, 'the delicately emerging stars,' to borrow one of his own phrases, 'with their private and ineffable glances.'

But Emerson was a preacher, the son and descendant of a line of preachers, and if his aphorisms escape—and some of them cannot be said to escape—being hortatory truisms, this is due partly to their imaginative phrasing, but still more to a certain humour which stamps them as his own, and a kind of provincial quaintness in their expression. It is unfortunate that the habit of oral delivery, of lecturing to uncultivated audiences about the country, led him to exaggerate this quaintness of expression, and somewhat strain and crack his voice. His best sentences are often to be found therefore in those journals in which he jotted down his thoughts and intuitions—the deposit, drop by drop, and day by day, of the life-long soliloquy of his mind. In his lectures, and in his essays (which were composed as lectures) a forced poetic note can sometimes be detected, a kind of shrill rhetoric, which obscures for too many readers that profundity of thought and that occasional perfection of phrasing which makes him rank as by no means the least important in that succession of great aphorists who have contributed to our literature so rich, so varied, and so disregarded a store of wise, pungent, or poetic sayings.

In addition to these writers—Bacon, Selden, Halifax, Johnson, Blake, Hazlitt, and Emerson—there are several minor English aphorists who must be briefly noticed. First among these is Ben Jonson, whose prose Discoveries are rich in pointed and profound sayings, and then James Harrington, the author of Oceana, who wrote two sets of political aphorisms in which he embodied his wise and liberal reflections on the troubled politics of his time. Three divines of the Church of England must be also mentioned, Thomas Fuller, Jeremy Taylor, and Thomas Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man. That miscellaneous and amusing writer Thomas Fuller, published among his numerous writings three series of 'Thoughts'—Good Thoughts in Bad Times (1645), Good Thoughts in Worse Times (1647), both written during the Civil Wars, and Mixt Contemplations on Better Times, published at the Restoration. The 'Thoughts' which make up these volumes are,

like the numerous 'Maxims' of his Holy and Profane State, little essays and reflections, and belong to that way of writing in detached paragraphs which the French call *Pensées*, but for which, though abundant in our literature, we have no generally accepted name. But among these Reflections or Laconics—and the old word Laconics is perhaps our best appellation for this way of writing—we find, as in all of Fuller's other writings, many aphoristic sentences, brief, pointed, and often winged with the quaint images which floated in such multitudes amid his wandering thoughts. 'Miracles are the swaddling-clothes of infant churches'; 'A fool's Paradise is a wise man's hell'; 'Anger is one of the sinews of the soul'; 'Pastime, like wine, is poison in the morning,' are examples of these brief and vivid phrases, and of the quaint originality of his way of thinking which gives an amusing twist to many of his sayings.

Our second divine is that great prose-poet, Jeremy Taylor, who, though his meaning was for the most part too richly adorned with splendid images to be bottled in a tiny phrase, yet gives us now and then in a brief and shining sentence the essence of his thought.

Thomas Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man, who was born in 1663, and died in 1755, was, like Lord Halifax, a deliberate writer of aphorisms; and in his *Sacra Privata* and his *Maxims of Piety and of Christianity* we possess two large collections of pious and edifying maxims. Wilson is principally remembered—as far as he is at all remembered—by the praise given by Matthew Arnold to this holy bishop, who united, Matthew Arnold says, the most sincere ardour and unction 'to that downright honesty and plain good sense which our English race has so powerfully applied to the divine impossibilities of religion.' Wilson's maxims, his 'valuable precepts and admonitions of piety,' as Matthew Arnold calls them, have often a perfection of form which distinguishes them from the general run of pious reflections. But this art, with its taint of original sin—and it was by means of an aphoristic phrase that Satan tempted Eve—seems to have got the better of Bishop Wilson now and then. 'Love is a talkative passion' is a saying which his episcopal pen might innocently let drop, but on opening his *Maxims of Piety and Christianity*, we are surprised to find him saying 'When we attend a funeral, we are apt to comfort ourselves with the happy difference there is betwixt us and our dead friend.' Even

less edifying, and we must hope, less true, is the remark on the first page of this volume: 'How many are raised to high posts in the Church by the instigation of the devil, that their fall may be more dismal!'

In addition to these divines, there are three other seventeenth-century writers, Hobbes, Milton, and Sir Thomas Browne. The works of Hobbes are rich in aphoristic thought, but he seldom expressed it in aphoristic terseness; while Milton's prose reflections are almost all too ample, and too amply embroidered, for us to call him an 'aphorismmer', in a word of his own coining. Browne is more deserving of the appellation, for although his meditations hover, for the most part, on vast and dusky wings, they are sometimes brief and pointed in their expression. Another seventeenth-century writer, Samuel Butler, the author of *Hudibras*, was a more deliberate writer of aphorisms, and his works contain a collection of them, which are not, however, of much interest or importance. William Penn's *Some Fruits of Solitude*, in *Reflections and Maxims*, which was published anonymously in 1693, with the *More Fruits of Solitude*, published in 1718, are collections of aphoristic sayings which enjoyed immense popularity in their time, and which Robert Louis Stevenson rediscovered and cherished with a peculiar enthusiasm. The ground for this enthusiasm is somewhat difficult to understand, as the reflections of the good Quaker show no great profundity of observation or subtlety of thought. Penn seems, however, to have studied La Rochefoucauld's maxims, and to have learned from him a certain neatness of expression, as when he says, for instance, 'They have a Right to censure, that have a Heart to Help,' 'Equivocation is half way to Lying, as Lying the whole way to Hell'; 'Every Stroke our Fury strikes is sure to hit ourselves at last.'

Of somewhat more interest is another contemporary aphorist who was also popular in his time, although he is completely forgotten now. This is a certain Dr Thomas Fuller, whose writings have been sometimes confused with those of Thomas Fuller, the celebrated divine, with whom, however, he seems not to have been connected save by name and possibly by some remote tie of kinship. Dr Fuller, who was born in 1654 and died at the age of eighty in 1734, spent his life as a physician at Sevenoaks in Kent, and toward the end of his long career wrote a collection of

3152 maxims, counsels, and cautions for the instruction of his son John, and the guidance through life of this well-advised young man. Many of these maxims are borrowed from other moralists, from the great store of didactic platitudes which has been accumulating ever since the dawn of moral reflection; there are others, however, which bear a more individual stamp, and seem to be the mellowed fruit of Dr Fuller's own experience—the experience of a wise, old, convivial, comfort-loving doctor in a country town. On almost every subject—on Friendship, Love, Marriage, Money, and Ambition—his maxims embody a singularly complete and practicable kind of wisdom. Young Fuller was admonished to think above all of his own comfort, to avoid ambition and the desire to play a leading part among his neighbours; he should marry a wife with money, and not too much money; he should shun the acquaintance of persons of high rank, whom it was easy, but extremely dangerous, to offend. Still greater care must he take to avoid making friends with poor people—the old doctor is most emphatic on this point; he himself had had several friends of this kind, whose endless sorrows and necessities had made him uneasy, and spoilt for him the enjoyment of his own money. Dr Fuller's maxims, though they embody an ideal of life which is not at all heroic, are full nevertheless of a shrewd and cautious kind of worldly wisdom which is often expressed in happy images and phrases. His books of maxims do not quite deserve the oblivion which has overtaken them. There is a dim light on their didactic pages of a kind of golden mediocrity, a mediocrity of ease and quiet and good food in a comfortable old house in Sevenoaks in Kent; and it is pleasant to think of the octogenarian doctor prosing away on summer afternoons to his deferential son, two hundred years ago.

The writing of aphorisms became something of a fashion in the eighteenth century. Lord Shaftesbury shows, in many a sentence of his *Characteristics* that he, like the French duke, and like Lords Halifax and Chesterfield, was a master of this aristocratic art; and Swift and Pope and Shenstone all left behind them collections of aphoristic sayings. Those of Swift are admirable in their sardonic terseness; Pope's are fewer; he possessed the aphoristic turn of mind, but employed it chiefly in his verses. When, however, he says 'A family is but too often a commonwealth of malignants',

he shows that he could have expressed himself, had he wished to do so, in vitriolic prose. The aphorisms of another poet, Shenstone, are much more numerous, and are not lacking in observation of others and of himself. But though his coins possess a certain weight, lustre is for the most part lacking in them; there is little distinction in their form and phrasing.

Aphoristic writing fell out of fashion in the nineteenth century; with the exception of Hazlitt and Emerson, none of its authors have paid much attention to this art. We possess several collections of Coleridge's thoughts and sayings, but these are, in their form, more brief essays or Laconics than aphorisms, and with few exceptions we do not find among them many terse and pointed phrases. This is true of the prose of his contemporaries, Keats and Shelley, in which however we catch now and then the gleam of some gnomic, and yet golden phrase.

From the writings of Disraeli and Oscar Wilde collections of sayings and maxims have been made; but Disraeli's pretentious aphorisms, and Oscar Wilde's paradoxes (for all their shining wit) must for the most part be classed among the counterfeit currency of thought. George Eliot's novels are rich in aphoristic wisdom; her mind had width and depth something like that of Goethe's, but she lacked for the most part Goethe's power of terse expression, although in Mrs Poyser she created the only female aphorist of whom our literature can boast. Another novelist, George Meredith, was a lover of aphorisms, and those he too sparsely quotes from the Egotist's Handbook, and from the Pilgrim's Script of Sir Austin Feverel, make us wish that we possessed more treasures from these imaginary collections. Of all our story-tellers, Robert Louis Stevenson was the most accomplished aphorist; he was a writer of moral essays as well as of fiction, and in these essays can be found many witty and wise sayings.

Three other nineteenth-century writers must be mentioned who were endowed with the aphoristic turn of thought; the first of these is Sir Henry Taylor, a poet whose play, Philip van Artevelde, is still remembered. Taylor was also an eminent Civil Servant and successful man of affairs, and for some strange reason it occurred to him to tell the truth about worldly success and how it is obtained—to describe the methods, the arts, and even the tricks by means of which ambitious men achieve, or try to achieve, the objects of

their ambition. In this book which he called *The Statesman*, and which was a cause among statesmen of considerable scandal, he condensed in brief aphoristic phrases much of that worldly wisdom which has so often found expression in our aphoristic literature. Sir Henry Taylor, when he found how much right-thinking people had been scandalized by his *Statesman*, pretended that he had written it with an ironic intention; but his maxims, like those of Chesterfield, possess a kind of weight and cynical integrity, as if he had embodied in them the frank expression of genuine experience, and had not, like most aphorists, made any attempt to be amusing or plausible or clever or ironic.

Of equal interest are the wise and pregnant sentences which abound in the writings of Walter Bagehot, that country banker who was not only the profoundest political thinker of his time, but also an accomplished painter of moral portraits, and a penetrating critic of literature as well. Samuel Butler, the author of *Erewhon*, like Samuel Butler, the author of *Hudibras*, was a copious writer of thoughts and reflections, but his *Note-Books*, like those of Coleridge, are more tiny essays than aphorisms, although they contain a certain number of famous and terse phrases. Coventry Patmore's *The Rod, the Root and the Flower* is a collection of detached religious meditations, which are hardly aphorisms; his biographer, however, has printed a number of briefer sayings of point and interest.

In other Victorian biographies, Rossetti's *Life*, and Benjamin Jowett's letters, we find other collections of sayings; Rossetti's are not very characteristic; the connoisseur in these matters would hardly attribute without evidence to the author of *The Blessed Damozel* the remark, 'No skunk can get rid of his own name by giving it to another.' The sayings of the famous Master of Balliol bear a more authentic stamp of his own image—'Young men make great mistakes in life: for one thing, they idealize love too much'; 'I hope our young men will not grow into such *dodgers* as these old men are. I believe everything a *young* man says to me'; 'Nowhere probably is there more true feeling, and nowhere worse taste, than in a churchyard';—Jowett's surviving friends and pupils will recognize in these sayings the acute accents of the Master's voice.

Of all these collected sayings in Victorian biographies those that

Mrs Creighton has printed in her life of Bishop Creighton are of the greatest interest and value. The late Bishop of London was, as Dean Inge has pointed out, a gifted aphorist; and when Creighton remarks, 'No people do so much harm as those who go about doing good', adding, however, for our consolation: 'It is wonderful how little mischief we can do with all our trouble,' we learn, as we learned from Bishop Wilson, that English prelates, when they take to writing aphorisms, can be quite as caustic as the lay masters of this form.

Dean Inge has also called attention to the aphorisms of Churton Collins, 'an able critic,' Dean Inge remarks, 'who, I believe, did not show much worldly wisdom in his conduct of affairs.' Some of Churton Collins' published aphorisms—'never trust a man who speaks well of everybody,' for instance, 'a wise man, like the moon, only shows his bright side to the world'—make us regret that of the hundreds of aphorisms which, his biographer tells us, Churton Collins wrote, only a small number have been given to the world.

The late Dr Bradley has printed a few—too few—philosophical aphorisms in the preface of his *Appearance and Reality*; but another and living philosopher, Mr Santayana, remains to show that this art, so difficult and so full of perils, is not yet among the perished arts, since one of its great masters is still living. Mr Mac-kail's writings show that he also possesses this gift, although he rarely exercises it.

Mr Bernard Shaw's witty Maxims for Revolutionists in *Man and Superman* are well known; among living writers he is, I believe, the only one who has published a collection of detached aphoristic sentences.

Man—this incomprehensible being—has been always the main object for the observation, moral or satiric, of gnomic writers, and his activities, as Dr Johnson said, will furnish 'the materials of speculation to the end of time.' . . . The passions of envy, anger, and emulation aroused by his encounter with the world, the fools and knaves he meets there, the arts by which he circumvents them, and the worldly prudence that should guide him, form the subject-matter of those worldly counsels in which our English aphorists abound. They seem to regard verbal encounters as of especial interest and importance, and to almost more than any other subject they have given their attention to the clash of tongues. 'A man is made

by conversation,' Dr Johnson said; his talk may establish or undo him in the world. A sage courtier of the Chinese empire once boasted that with his 'five inches of tongue' he had won his way to greatness in the world; and this world of kings and courts, of ceremony and pageants, of wealth and vanity and fashion, has been the subject of much moral as well as worldly observation; while to the aphorists of so political a race as the English, the subject of power and politics has always aroused of course a special interest.

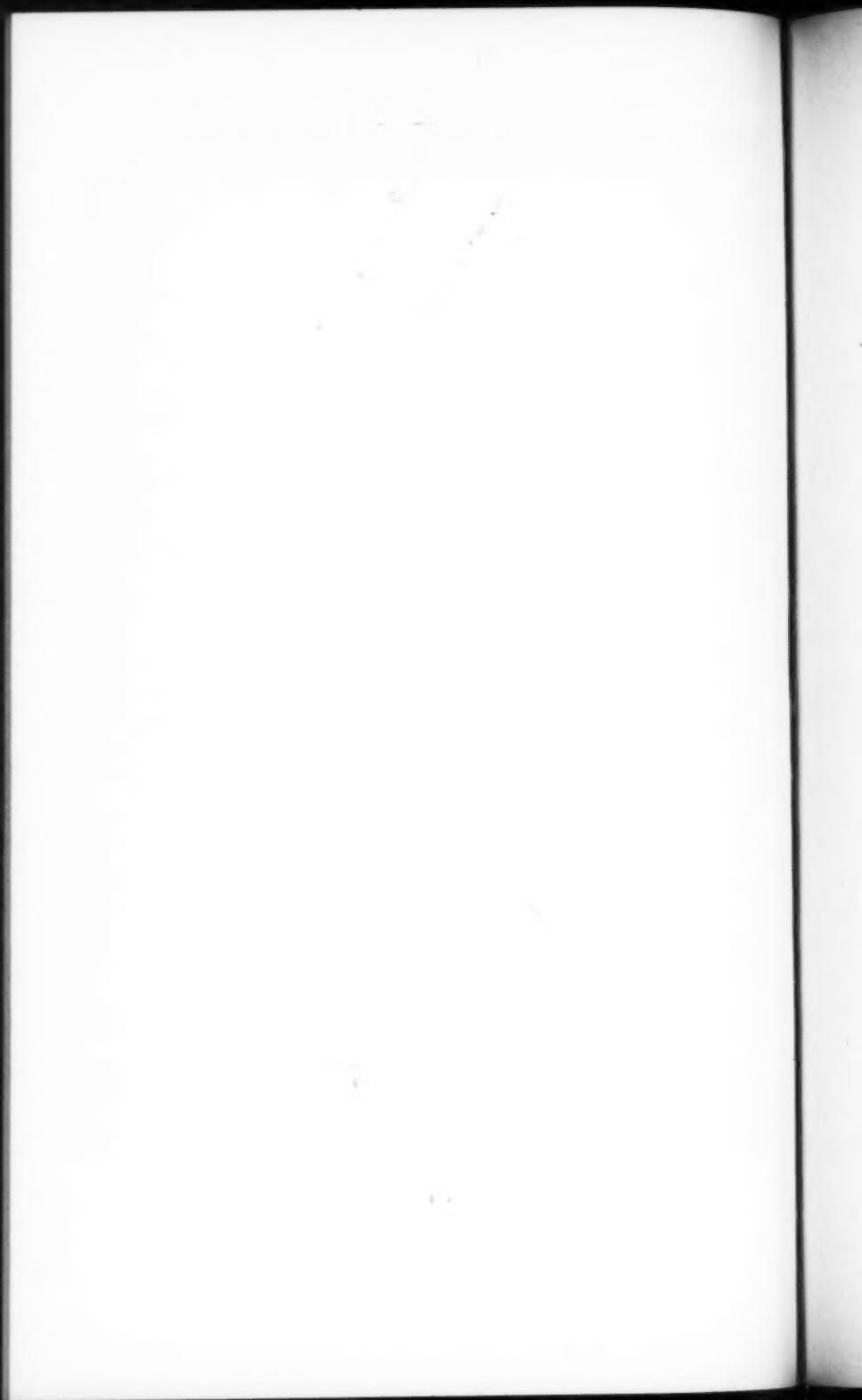
Contrasted with these worlds are those of learning and literature and art and religion; and finally the great subject of death, with which this sententious creature vanishes from the scene of his activities, leaving behind him a few memorable comments upon himself, and his experience. . . . If the French are famous for the lucid perfection of their winged sayings, we may take pride in the far greater variety of our native species, all the many-coloured butterflies and dusky moths of English imaginative thought.

The End

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GIRL'S BUST. BY HERMANN HALLER



THREE POEMS

BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

ON GAY WALLPAPER

The green-blue ground
is ruled with silver lines
to say the sun is shining

And on this moral sea
of grass or dreams lie flowers
or baskets of desires

Heaven knows what they are
between cerulean shapes
laid regularly round

Mat roses and tridentate
leaves of gold
threes, threes and threes

Three roses and three stems
the basket floating
standing in the horns of blue

Repeated to the ceiling
to the windows
where the day blows in

The scalloped curtains to
the sound of rain

THE LILY

The branching head of
tiger-lilies through the window
in the air

THREE POEMS

And in the air a humming-bird
is still on whirring wings
above the flowers

By spotted petals curling back
and tongues that hang
the air is seen

It's raining
water's caught
among the curled back petals

Caught and held
and there's a fly
are blossoming

THE SOURCE

1

The slope of the heavy woods
pales and disappears
in a wall of mist that hides

the edge above whose peak
last night the moon—

But it is morning and a new light
marks other things
a pasture which begins

where silhouettes of scrub
and balsams stand uncertainly

On whose green three maples
are distinctly pressed
beside a red barn

with new shingles in the old
all cancelled by

A triple elm's inverted
lichen mottled
triple thighs from which

whisps of twigs
droop with sharp leaves

Which shake in the crotch
brushing the stained bark
fitfully

2

Beyond which lies
the profound detail of the woods
restless, distressed

soft underfoot
the low ferns

Mounting a rusty root
the pungent mould
globular fungi

water in an old
hoof print

Cow dung and in
the uneven aisles of
the trees

rock strewn a stone
half green

A spring in whose depth

THREE POEMS

white sand bubbles
overflows

3

clear under late raspberries
and delicate stemmed touch-me-nots

Where alders follow it marking
the low ground
the water is cast upon

a stair of uneven stones
with a rustling sound

An edge of bubbles stirs
swiftness is moulded
speed grows

the profuse body advances
over the stones unchanged

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DR WILLIAMS' POSITION

BY EZRA POUND

THERE is an anecdote told me by his mother, who wished me to understand his character, as follows: The young William Carlos, aged let us say about seven, arose in the morning, dressed and put on his shoes. Both shoes buttoned on the left side. He regarded this untoward phenomenon for a few moments and then carefully removed the shoes, placed shoe *a* that had been on his left foot, on his right foot, and shoe *b*, that had been on the right foot, on his left foot; both sets of buttons again appeared on the left side of the shoes.

This stumped him. With the shoes so buttoned he went to school, but . . . and here is the significant part of the story, he spent the day in careful consideration of the matter.

It happens that this type of sensibility, persisting through forty years, is of extreme, and almost unique, value in a land teeming, swarming, pullulating with clever people all capable of competent and almost instantaneous extroversion; during the last twenty of these years it has distinguished Dr Williams from floral and unconscious mind of the populace and from the snappy go-getters who'der seen wot wuz rong in er moment.

It has prevented our author from grabbing ready made conclusions, and from taking too much for granted.

There are perhaps, or perhaps have been milieux where the reflective and examining habits would not have conferred, unsupported, a distinction. But chez nous, for as long as I can remember if an article appeared in Munsey's or McClure's, expressing a noble passion (civic or other) one cd. bank (supposing one were exercising editorial or quasi-editorial functions) on seeing the same article served up again in some fifty lyric expressions within, let us say, three or four months.

Our national mind hath about it something "marvelous porous"; an idea or notion dropped into N. Y. harbour emerges in Sante Fe or Galveston, watered, diluted, but still the same idea or notion, pale but not wholly denatured; and the time of transit is very

considerably lower, than any "record" hitherto known. We have the defects of our qualities, and that very alertness which makes the single American diverting or enlivening in an European assembly often undermines his literary capacity.

For fifteen or eighteen years I have cited Williams as sole known American-dwelling author who cd. be counted on to oppose some sort of barrier to such penetration; the sole catalectic in whose presence some sort of modification wd. take place.

Williams has written: "All I do is to try to understand something in its natural colours and shapes." There cd. be no better effort underlying any literary process, or used as preparative for literary process; but it appears, it wd. seem, almost incomprehensible to men dwelling west of the Atlantic: I don't mean that it appears so in theory, America will swallow anything in theory, all abstract statements are perfectly welcome, given a sufficiently plausible turn. But the concrete example of this literary process, whether by Williams or by that still more unreceived and uncomprehended native hickory Mr Joseph Gould, seems an unrelated and inexplicable incident to our populace and to our "monde—or whatever it is—littéraire." We have, of course, distinctly American authors, Mr Frost for example, but there is an infinite gulf between Mr Frost on New England customs, and Mr Gould on race prejudice; Mr Frost having simply taken on, without any apparent self-questioning a definite type and set of ideas and sensibilities, known and established in his ancestral demesne. That is to say he is "typical New England." Gould is no less New England, but parts of his writing cd. have proceeded equally well from a Russian, a German, or an exceptional Frenchman—the difference between regionalism, or regionalist art and art that has its roots in a given locality.

Carlos Williams has been determined to stand or sit as an American. Freud wd. probably say "because his father was English" (in fact half English, half Danish). His mother, as ethnologists have before noted, was a mixture of French and Spanish; of late years (the last four or five) Dr Williams has laid claim to a somewhat remote hebrew connexion, possibly a rabbi in Saragossa, at the time of the siege. He claims American birth, but I strongly suspect that he emerged on ship-board just off Bedloe's Island and that his dark and serious eyes gazed up in their first sober contemplation at the Statue and its brazen and monstrous nightshirt.

At any rate he has not in his ancestral endocrines the arid curse



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WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS. BY EVA HERRMANN

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of our nation. None of his immediate forbears burnt witches in Salem, or attended assemblies for producing prohibitions. His father was in the rum trade; the rich ichors of the Indes, Hollands, Jamaicas, Goldwasser, Curaçoas provided the infant William with material sustenance. Spanish was not a strange tongue, and the trade profited by discrimination, by dissociations performed with the palate. All of which belongs to an American yesterday, and is as gone as les caves de Mouquin.

From this secure ingle William Carlos was able to look out on his circumjacent and see it as something interesting *but exterior*; as he cd. not by any possibility resemble any member of the Concord School he was able to observe national phenomena without necessity for constant vigilance over himself, there was no instinctive fear that if he forgot himself he might be like some really unpleasant Ralph Waldo; neither is he, apparently, filled with any vivid desire to murder the indescribable dastards who betray the work of the national founders, who spread the fish-hooks of bureaucracy in our once, perhaps, pleasant bypaths.

One might accuse him of being, blessedly, the observant foreigner, perceiving american vegetation and landscape quite directly, as something put there for him to look at; and this contemplative habit extends, also blessedly, to the fauna.

When Mr Wanamaker's picture gallery burned in the dead of winter I was able to observe the destruction of faked Van Dykes etc, *comme spectacle*, the muffler'd lads of the village tearing down gold frames in the light of the conflagration, the onyx-topped tables against the blackness were still more "tableau," and one cd. think detachedly of the French Revolution. Mr Wanamaker was nothing to me, he paid his employees badly, and I knew the actual spectacle was all I shd. ever get out of him. I cannot, on the other hand, observe the national "mansion" befouled by Volsteads and Bryans, without anger; I cannot see liberties that have lasted for a century thrown away for nothing, frontiers tied up by imbecile formulae, a bureaucracy and system exceeding "anything known in Russia under the Czars" without indignation. And this comparison to Russia is not mine, but comes from a Czarist official who had been stationed in Washington.

And by just this susceptibility on my part Williams, as author, has the no small advantage. If he wants to "do" anything about what he sees, this desire for action does not rise until he has

meditated in full and at leisure. Where I see scoundrels and vandals, he sees a spectacle or an ineluctable process of nature. Where I want to kill at once, he ruminates, and if this rumination leads to anger it is an almost inarticulate anger, that may but lend colour to style, but which stays almost wholly in the realm of his art. I mean it is a qualificative, contemplative, does not drive him to some ultra-artistic or non-artistic activity.

Even recently where one of his characters clearly expresses a dissatisfaction with the American milieu, it is an odium against a condition of mind, not against overt acts or institutions.

2

The lack of celerity in his process, the unfamiliarity with facile or with established solutions wd. account for the irritation his earlier prose, as I remember it, caused to sophisticated Britons. "How any man could go on talking about such things!" and so on. But the results of this sobriety of unhurried contemplation, when apparent in such a book as *In the American Grain*, equally account for the immediate appreciation of Williams by the small number of french critics whose culture is sufficiently wide to permit them to read any modern tongue save their own.

Here, at last, was an America treated with a seriousness and by a process comprehensible to an European.

One might say that Williams has but one fixed idea, as an author; i.e., he starts where an european wd. start if an european were about to write of America: sic: America is a subject of interest, one must inspect it, analyse it, and treat it as subject. There are plenty of people who think they "ought" to write "about" America. This is an wholly different kettle of fish. There are also numerous people who think that the given subject has an inherent interest simply because it is American and that this gives it ipso facto a dignity or value above all other possible subjects; Williams may even think he has, or may once have thought he had this angle of attack, but he hasn't.

After a number of years, and apropos of a given incident he has (first quarterly number of *transition*) given a perfectly clear verbal manifestation of his critical attitude. It is that of his most worthy european contemporaries, and of all good critics. It is also symptomatic of New York that his analysis of the so-called criticisms of

Antheil's New York concert shd. appear in Paris, a year after the event, in an amateur periodical.

The main point of his article being that no single one of the critics had made the least attempt at analysis, or had in any way tried to tell the reader what the music consisted of, what were its modes or procedures. And that this was, of course, what the critics were, or would in any civilized country have been, there for. This article is perhaps Williams' most important piece of critical writing, or at any rate his most apposite piece; failing a wide distribution of the magazine in which it appeared, it shd. be reprinted in some more widely distributable journal.

As to the illusion of "progress," it wd. seem that this illusion chez nous is limited to the greater prevalence of erotic adventure, whether developed in quality or merely increased in quantity I have no present means of deciding; as to any corresponding "progress" or catching-up in affairs of the intellect, the illusion wd. seem to rise from the fact that in our literary milieux certain things are now known that were not known in 1912; but this wd. not constitute a change of relation; i.e., wd. not prove that America is not still fifteen years or twenty years or more "behind the times." That is to say we must breed a non-Mabie, non-Howells type of author. And of the possible types Williams and Gould perhaps serve as our best examples—as distinct from the porous types.

I mean, not by this sentence, but by the whole trend of this article: when a creative act occurs in America "no one" seems aware of what is occurring. In music we have chefs d'orchestre, not composers, and we have something very like it in letters, though the distinction is less obvious.

Following this metaphor, it is undeniable that part of my time, for example, has been put into orchestral directing. Very little of Dr Williams' energy has been so deflected. If he did some Rimbaud forty years late it was nevertheless composition, and I don't think he knew it was Rimbaud until after he finished his operation.

Orchestral directing is "all right" mais c'est pas la même chose. We are still so generally obsessed by monism and monotheistical backwash, and ideas of orthodoxy that we (and the benighted Britons) can hardly observe a dissociation of ideas without thinking a censure is somehow therein implied.

We are not, of course we are not, free from the errors of post-

reformation Europe. The triviality of philosophical writers through the last few centuries is extraordinary, in the extent that is, that they have not profited by modes of thought quite common to biological students; in the extent that they rely on wholly unfounded assumptions, for no more apparent reason than that these assumptions are currently and commonly made. Reputed philosophers will proceed (for volumes at a time) as if the only alternative for monism were dualism; among distinguished literati, *si licet*, taking personal examples: Mr Joyce will argue for hours as if one's attack on Christianity were an attack on the Roman church *in favour of* Luther or Calvin or some other half-baked ignoramus and the "protestant" conventicle. Mr Eliot will reply, even in print, to Mr Babbitt as if some form of Xtianity or monotheism were the sole alternative to irreligion; and as if monism or monotheism were anything more than an hypothesis agreeable to certain types of very lazy mind too weak to bear an uncertainty or to remain in "uncertainty."

And, again, for such reasons William Williams, and may we say, his Mediterranean equipment, has an importance in relation to his temporal intellectual circumjacence.

Very well, he does not "conclude"; his work has been "often formless," "incoherent," opaque, obscure, obfuscated, confused, truncated, etc.

I am not going to say: "form" is a non-literary component shoved onto literature by Aristotle or by some non-literatus who told Aristotle about it. Major form is not a non-literary component. But it can do us no harm to stop an hour or so and consider the number of very important chunks of world-literature in which form, major form, is remarkable mainly for absence.

There is a corking plot to the Iliad, but it is not told us in the poem, or at least not in the parts of the poem known to history as The Iliad. It wd. be hard to find a worse justification of the theories of dramatic construction than the Prometheus of Aeschylus. It will take a brighter lad than the author of these presents to demonstrate the element of form in Montaigne or in Rabelais; Lope has it, but it is not the "Aristotelian" beginning, middle and end, it is the quite reprehensible: BEGINNING WHOOP and any sort of a trail off. Bouvard and Pécuchet wasn't even finished by its author. And of all these Lope is the only one we cd. sacrifice without inestimable loss and impoverishment.

The component of these great works and *the* indispensable component is texture; which Dr Williams indubitably has in the best, and in increasingly frequent, passages of his writing.

3

In current American fiction that has often quite a good deal of merit, and which has apparently been concocted with effort and goodish intentions, the failure to attain first-rateness seems to be mainly of two sorts: The post-Zolas or post-realists deal with subject matter, human types etc, so simple that one is more entertained by Fabre's insects or Hudson's birds and wild animals; and the habits or the reactions of "an ant" or "a chaffinch" emerge in a more satisfactory purity or at least in some modus that at least seems to present a more firm and sustaining pabulum to reflection.

Secondly: there are the perfumed writers. They aim, one believes, at olde lavender; but the ultimate aroma lacks freshness. "Stale meringue," "last week's custard" and other metaphorical expressions leap to mind when one attempts to give an impression of their quality. One "ought" perhaps to make a closer analysis and give the receipt for the fadeur; though like all mediocre dilutions it is harder to analyse than the clearer and fresher substance. When I was fourteen people used to read novels of the same sort, let us say *The House of a Thousand Candles* etc of which one may remember a title, but never remembers anything else, and of which the author's name has, at the end of five or ten years, escaped one.

It is perfectly natural that people wholly surrounded by rough-necks, whether in mid-nineteenth century or in *The Hesperian* present, should want to indicate the desirability of sweetness and refinement, but . . . these things belong to a different order of existence, different that is from pity, terror, τὸ καλόν, and those things with which art, plastic or that of the writer is concerned.

Now in reading Williams, let us say this last book *A Voyage to Pagany* or almost anything else he has written, one may often feel: he is wrong. I don't mean wrong in idea, but: that is the wrong way to write it. He oughtn't to have said that. But there is a residue of effect. The work is always distinct from the writing that one finds merely hopeless and in strict sense irremediable.

There is a difference in kind between it and the mass of current writing, about which there is: just nothing to be done, and which no series of retouches, or cuttings away wd. clarify, or leave hard.

Art very possibly *ought* to be the supreme achievement, the "accomplished"; but there is the other satisfactory effect, that of a man hurling himself at an indomitable chaos, and yanking and hauling as much of it as possible into some sort of order (or beauty), aware of it both as chaos and as potential.

Form is, indeed, very tiresome when in reading current novel, we observe the thinning residue of pages, 50, 30, and realize that there is now only time (space) for the hero to die a violent death, no other solution being feasible in that number of pages.

To come at it another way: There are books that are clever enough, good enough, well enough done to fool the people who don't know, or to divert one in hours of fatigue. There are other books—and they may be often less clever, and may often show less accomplishment—which, despite their ineptitudes, and lack of accomplishment, or "form," and finish, contain something for the best minds of the time, a time, any time. If Pagany is not Williams' best book, if even on some counts, being his first long work, it is his worst, it indubitably contains pages and passages that are worth any one's while, and that provide mental cud for any ruminant tooth.

4

And finally, to comply with those requirements for critics which Dr Williams has outlined in his censure of Mr Anthel's critics: The particular book that is occasion for this general discussion of Williams, *A Voyage to Pagany*,¹ has not very much to do with the "art of novel writing," which Dr Williams has fairly clearly abjured. Its plot-device is the primitive one of "a journey," frankly avowed. Entire pages cd. have found place in a simple autobiography of travel.

In the genealogy of writing it stems from Ulysses, or rather we wd. say better: Williams' *The Great American Novel* 80 pages, Three Mountains Press 1923 was Williams' first and strongest derivation from Ulysses, an "inner monologue," stronger and more

¹ *A Voyage to Pagany*. By William Carlos Williams. 10mo. 338 pages. The Macaulay Company. \$2.50.

gnarled, or stronger *because* more gnarled at least as I see it, than the Pagany.

The other offspring from Ulysses, the only other I have seen possessing any value is John Rodker's "Adolphe 1920." The two books are greatly different. The *Gt. American Novel* is simply the application of Joycean method to the American circumjacence. The *Adolphe*, professedly taking its schema from Benjamin Constant, brings the Joycean methodic inventions into a form; slighter than Ulysses, as a *rondeau* is slighter than a *canzone*, but indubitably a "development," a definite step in general progress of writing, having as have at least two other novels by Rodker, its definite shaped construction. And yet, if one read it often enough the element of form emerges in the great American Novel, not probably governing the whole, but in the shaping of at least some of the chapters, notably Chapter VII, the one beginning "Nuevo Mundo."

As to subject or problem, the Pagany relates to the Jamesian problem of U. S. A. vs. Europe, the international relation etc; the particular equation of the Vienna milieu has had recent treatment "from the other end on" in Joseph Bard's *Shipwreck in Europe*, more sprightly and probably less deeply concerned with the salvation of the protagonist; I think the continental author mentions as a general and known post-war quantity: the American or Americans who comes or come to Vienna to find out why they can't enjoy life, even after getting a great deal of money.

In the *American Grain* remains, I imagine Dr Williams' book having the greater interest for the European reader. In the looseish structure of the Pagany I don't quite make out what, unless it be simple vagary of the printer, has caused the omission of *The Venus* (July *DIAL*), pages obviously written to occur somewhere in the longer work, though they do form a whole in themselves, and pose quite clearly the general question, or at least one phase of the question posed in the Pagany.

In all the books cited,¹ the best pages of Williams—at least for the present reviewer—are those where he has made the least effort to fit anything into either story, book, or (*In the American Grain*)

¹ *The Tempers*: Elkin Matthews; 1913. *Al Que Quiere*: The Four Seas Company; 1917. *Kora in Hell*: The Four Seas Company; 1920. *Sour Grapes*: The Four Seas Company; 1921. *The Great American Novel*: Three Mountains Press; 1923. *In the American Grain*: Albert and Charles Boni; 1925. *A Voyage to Pagany*: The Macaulay Company; 1928.

into an essay. I wd. almost move from that isolated instance to the generalization that plot, major form, or outline shd. be left to authors who feel some inner need for the same; even let us say a very strong, unusual, unescapable need for these things; and to books where the said form, plot, etc. springs naturally from the matter treated. When put on, *ab exteriore* they probably lead only to dulness, confusion or *remplissage* or the "falling between two stools." I don't mean that Williams "falls"; he certainly has never loaded on enough shapings to bother one. As to his two dialectical ladies? Of course he may know ladies who argue like that. There may be ladies who so argue, aided by Bacchus. In any case the effect of one human on another is such that Williams may elicit such dialectic from ladies who in presence of a more dialectic or voluble male wd. be themselves notably less so. No one else now writing wd. have given us sharp clarity of the medical chapters.

As to the general value of Carlos Williams' poetry I have nothing to retract from the affirmation of its value that I made ten years ago, nor do I see any particular need of repeating that estimate; I shd. have to say the same things, and it wd. be with but a pretence or camouflage of novelty.

When an author preserves, by any means whatsoever, his integrity, I take it we ought to be thankful. We retain a liberty to speculate as to how he might have done better, what paths wd. conduce to, say progress in his next opus, etc. to ask whether for example Williams wd. have done better to read W. H. Hudson than to have been interested in Joyce. At least there is place for reflection as to whether the method of Hudson's *A Traveller in Little Things* wd. serve for an author so concerned with his own insides as is Williams; or whether Williams himself isn't at his best—retaining interest in the uncommunicable or the hidden roots of the consciousness of people he meets, but yet confining his statement to presentation of their objective manifests.

No one but a fanatic impressionist or a fanatic subjectivist or introversialist will try to answer such a question save in relation to a given specific work.



DIE SCHNAPSBRENNER. BY ALFRED KUBIN

TWO POEMS

BY WITTER BYNNER

REMEMBERING

You are between my breaths, the out and in,
Closer than my own mind. If I begin
To think of you, you interrupt my will
With heart-beats that are lightning in me still—
As they were when by a look you let me know
That you would be beside me and then go . . .

VIGIL

Let me no longer separate my share
From the lot of other men; but let me dare
To be more forlorn than a man alone can be,
And yet more heartened by this adversity
Common to them and me and levelling all.
There never was singleness in a funeral.
Yet with each thought I take of life, your eyes
Are widened open and your limbs arise
Beautiful again, not only as they were
When I could touch your lips and feel them stir
The life that was theirs to laugh with and mine to love,
But by some miracle leaning above
My own in the same tender sacrament
Of night as when together we were blent.
Wherever love is, let me yield and share
This love of yours, and so be better aware
Of my beloved than I was, before
The door that seemed to close became no door.

EL PENITENTE

BY RAYMOND OTIS

ALBIQUIU lay sleeping in the moonlight. The jumble of adobes was luminous as with a radiance in the walls, its shining nuances of grey, flanked by black shadows. Silence as deep as the shadows, enveloped the town, the hills, the broad valley below the hills. The village had been built along a water-course, but had been moved from the valley and poised on a shelf halfway to the summit of the encircling ridge. As one looked by day, from the side of the plaza which over-hung the edge of the descent to the plain, the sweep of valley lay shimmering in a restless desert heat; by night it was a vast basin of darkness—except where the river came between the observer and the moon; a sparkle of moonlight was there.

The store—the centre of life in the town—was owned by Alberto Roybal, an old man, leader of the village; he was also head of the local chapter of Penitente Brothers. Full of strength and vitality he presented a curious contrast to his townspeople. He had made a collection of Spanish books from which he lent for the asking; there was no denying his sincerity; he waged war continually on American culture lest it undermine the faith of the brotherhood. Whence had he come? Why should one learned and full of enterprise cling to those full of indolence?

"Do not be deceived," his voice would thunder in the *morada*. "You young men upon whom the life of the brotherhood depends, be not deceived with tales of grace and salvation. Accept that easy faith if you will and go to everlasting hell." And he would finish with arms aloft, his whole body trembling in the candlelight.

He lived alone in a tiny adobe house. His bed was of boughs. One year he had been crucified, and of his many penances this had been the supreme ecstasy. Now the Lenten season drew toward Good Friday. In enacting the Passion and Death of the Saviour during Holy Week, he was the dominant figure; his back was covered with scars. The original three gashes down and three across had been all but obliterated by fresh disciplines. It was

terrible and inspiring to see him scourging himself, the blood clotting and fresh blood running down; but when urged to abandon the annual scourging, he smiled; his passion for pain, as strong as when he had first come to the village. Yet all had experienced the benefit of his love for them. It was impossible to hurt his feelings. His prayers for the members were many. They in turn prayed for him. The brothers had waived precedent and he had been *hermano mayor* for the past fifteen years. His zeal in keeping order and settling disputes was unrivalled, his own penance the more severe.

It was Wednesday—the morning of Holy Week and was still dusk. There was a knock at the door.

"*Como le vas, Señor Alberto?*" Alberto was seated on a rude wooden chair, reading from an old book that resembled a testament. Raising his eyes, he looked at his visitor without speaking.

"What do you read, Señor Alberto?" It was the priest who enquired, the only one abroad at that hour.

"A book," said the old man sourly.

"I see. What book?"

"Young man," said Alberto in scholarly Spanish, "forty years ago, we of the Hermanos Penitentes were members of your church and worshipped there. A letter came from the Bishop demanding that we abandon our practice of flagellation or be denied the Sacrament. We chose the latter. In trying to persuade me to obey the command of your superior, you waste your time. An heroic self-discipline gives life and unity to our brotherhood. I welcome you to my house, but I will not talk about my Order; that you must understand."

"You want us to give up our ritual," the old man went on with excitement. "What could be more repentant than scourging? It is the divine Passion and Death of the Saviour, which makes us . . ." Drawing himself to full height, he listened. "*El Pitero!* I must go quickly. It is the flute." An indeterminate wail trembled in the air as he hastened across the plaza.

In the *morada*, a two-room adobe, the other officers were assembled; confessions were heard far into the night. The glow of a few candles showed bloody vestments hung against the wall—with here and there, *disciplinas*, some of fibre interwoven with bits of glass, Alberto's lash conspicuous among them; the mesh was looser

that the blow might be more cruel. From time to time during the confessions the brothers would scourge themselves—so violently that blood was spattered on the picture of Mary and the babe, the blows accompanied by the chanting of the officers, the *Hermanos de Luz*:

Upon our knees,
We all implore
This blood of mine that
I am now about to shed.

I, sinner,
Have already sworn
To praise the blood of
This discipline.

To praise you I come,
Jesus and Mary,
To implore the blood
Of this discipline.

Confessions and scourgings continued throughout the night. It was dawn before Alberto returned to his house. Thursday, while the younger brothers carried crosses over the frozen ground—crosses five times a man's weight—he slept fitfully, summoning his powers for the approaching ordeal, dimly aware by the sounds which came to him, the wail of the flute and the chanting of the cross-bearers, of that which took place. Shortly before midnight he rose. Before leaving the house, he knelt in prayer, for himself, for his fellow Penitentes. The final words of his supplication he spoke aloud, in a trembling voice . . . "and Lord, I call upon Thee to witness the sorrow of my heart, to see the voluntary agony of my penance. May it please Thee and be good in Thine eyes; may Thou look favourably upon that which I am about to do. And Oh, Lord! preserve her whom I loved without knowing it, guard her and protect her until my happiness is death!"

He remained kneeling a moment. Then, murmuring, "For the love of God," he brushed back the coals from his hearth, closed the door, and made his way slowly to the *morada*. As he was about

to go in he saw the *pitero*, and nodded. A moment later a high melody pierced the air and reiterated itself in the hills. The Day of the Cross was at hand.

A procession filed from the *morada*, and moved with a kind of rhythm along a trail to the summit of a hill on which a cross stood spectral in the moonlight—a man with a lantern marching funereally at the head, swinging his light like a slow pendulum. Among the flagellants were cross-bearers. Towering above the rest was Alberto, naked but for a loin-cloth, for the fiftieth time humbling himself for the glory of God. The opening lines of a hymn were heard:

There is no one now
Who is not worth something,
Christ is already dead.

Christ is already dead
And life is ended,
Give him now your soul,
He calls for it.

Issuing from the *morada*, the march described a wide circle, returning again to the door of the *morada*. Small crosses on the way—stopping-places—represented the stations to Calvary. The hymn continued. Women had entered the procession and sang with the men. As they returned to the chapel the singing grew more impassioned, the scourging more violent, each step marked by its trail of blood.

Now Mary
With a broken heart,
Lays in the sepulchre
Her Lord.

The hymn, wild and high, lingered in lofty tremolos. Alberto, streaming with blood, bore a great cross which he had taken from the shoulders of a fainting brother. Muscles swelled; breath was short. Alberto moaned and pressed his eyelids tight. At the top he wavered, stood a moment, and stumbled. The great beams fell

on him and he lay still; one of the arms had struck his chest. He made a movement to rise, but was held down and they carried him into the *morada*.

"For the love of God, the three meditations of the Passion of our Lord!" he said.

"He thinks he's a *novio*," one of the brothers whispered, "saying the words of those who request the lash! God guard him."

The *enfermero*, the officer who cleansed the wounds of the brothers, bathed Alberto's back with Romero tea. Now and then the old man moaned; then raising himself on one elbow he repeated a part of the prayer he had made in his own house, "Oh Lord, preserve her whom I loved without knowing it!"

What did that mean?

"It may be he means Mary, the blessed mother."

"But he said 'without knowing it.' It could hardly be that."

Before long he rose, unsteadily, but with heroic determination, and bidding the others forget him and proceed with their devotions, he went home to his house.

By sunrise, however, he was up, prepared for the culmination of the Lenten ordeal. As if death were his only recompense, he accompanied the others, assembled by the flute for the march to the cemetery.

What if in the exalted office of *hermano mayor* one need not scourge himself! With his black hood, short white drawers, and the splotch of blood on his back—who could tell him from the others? But he was obliged to abandon the march and wait for the brothers in the *morada*.

When they returned and had taken their places before the altar, Alberto still sat with bowed head, in silence. Finally he spoke to the *hermano* at his side; small crosses and cactus were brought; he blessed them and they were taken into the *morada* proper. The flute sounded and the men picked up their scourges again for their final march to the cross. Alberto stood with bowed head as the Christo—upon the cross—was brought from the *morada*, and laid prostrate by the spot on which the crucifixion was to be enacted. The brothers gathered with some few women, relatives of the man who had offered himself for the ordeal.

The cross was then raised and in the silence which followed, Alberto read the sermon of the seven last words, after which he sank

slowly to his knees. When the *hermano* on the cross had fainted—the signal for the cross to be taken down—Alberto did not move; then slowly he fell, as if an unseen resistance retarded his falling. The cross was being lowered as they carried him to his house and laid him on his bed of boughs.

The next day a great crowd stood about, wailing and chanting prayers for him, the *hermano mayor*; hatless, in overalls, with fresh wounds from their penance, the *hermanos* clung to their dying leader.

Told that Alberto was dying, the priest came to the adobe, toward sundown. Looking at Alberto, he shook his head.

"What happened to him?" he asked in Spanish.

"The cross, it fell on him."

"Have you had a doctor?"

"Stop," commanded Alberto with his old vigour, "I do not want a doctor.

"Listen to me, all of you. I came to you many years ago, a young man, thirty years old.

"I am a Spaniard, a noble. My father owned land near Santa Fe, held by grant from the King of Spain. He was rich.

"Don Felipe Romero; that was my father's name. I grew up on the *hacienda* near Santa Fe, but was sent to my own land to finish my education. At the University there were a number of us from New Spain and we banded together, learned evil ways from our fellows. When it came time to return I was persuaded to stay in Spain with my relatives. One of these, my uncle, loved my father with devotion and undertook to educate me in the great cities of Spain, but I was ungrateful. Life was sweet; my blood was hot; I was young.

"We went the round of the festivals, I and my wayward friends, spending, spending."

Outside, the women thought of uncooked suppers; a few, impatient, drifted away and gradually the number dwindled. There were children to be cared for.

"That was a time, Padre, for your Church to save me. It was soon too late. I have lived long only because of this life here, not because I have wanted to. The power that my uncle's position gave him had its echo in my arrogance and extravagance. I rode Arabian horses; our estate was famous for its magnificence.

"I met Manuelita at a royal ball in Madrid. *Por Dios*, how beautiful! She wore the Spanish comb, her eyes flashed. I was inflamed not with love but with desire; I tried to seduce her but she drove me off. There was a woman good by a natural endowment. I knew later. At the time I was offended and left for easier prey.

"I went from bad to worse; I surfeited myself with sin, and went home to my uncle but it was not for long. From across the sea my parents voiced their anxiety and one day my uncle told me he had arranged a marriage for me. When he told me it was Manuelita I was to marry, I was pleased, nothing more. She was rich, beautiful, amiable, and would make the right kind of wife for a free-living man. I could show her off and thus gain prestige. She came to visit us and between my sins I made love to her, thinking she cared no more for me than I for her.

"That was my first great mistake. My egotism was so monstrous a thing that I failed to see the sympathy in her eyes.

"We were married in my uncle's own chapel. The event was heralded throughout Spain—echoes of it carried even across the sea. I remember the cry that rose from my uncle's servants outside the chapel." Alberto paused. "Curious that I should remember that. The mind is treacherous with memories; faithful here and fickle there.

"It was brilliant—a brilliant match. Everybody rejoiced but Manuelita and me. Yet I was pleased, for she was an ornament of which I might be proud, but in my mind I was planning escape and fell swiftly into my old ways. Manuelita looked on with seeming indifference.

"She fulfilled her vows; I continued to be proud of her and to go elsewhere for my love. My sins were no secret. She knew but uttered never a word in reproach. I grew more abandoned; it did not occur to me that she cared. I urged her to take lovers as I was doing and failed to understand the look that she gave me; the wistfulness, the infinitude of sadness that was in it. My fortunes increased through the death of my family in the New World. I determined to remain in Spain and bought lands there.

"I had planned a festival for our tenth anniversary." Alberto interrupted himself. "Come closer, my voice goes. I am of you, *hermanos*.

"I had imported dancers, music from the city of the king and entertainers from Paris. A three-day *fiesta* was my plan, to end with a bull-fight, for which I built an arena big enough to hold all my guests and people without number from the countryside.

"God! that I should live to tell it, like this. In an enclosure half-way up the arena sat Manuelita. Arms waved and cries filled the air. In the midst of it all, the structure began to move, and crashed to the ground. She was pinned beneath an immovable beam of the platform I had made for her glory. It was then, for the first time, that I began to understand. In her look was that sadness. She spoke my name, softly, and raised her eyes to heaven. 'O God, forgive and save him!' she said. Her words plunged me in a transport of grief. I fell at her side asking what did it mean. 'God forgive him,' she said and died.

"I sought escape from my conscience; I tried every form of forgetfulness. Then it came to me that these whom I had pitied as ignorant unenlightened self-torturers, had nearest communion with Him who died to save such as I. There is peace in acting the drama of Christ, Padre; it is ageless.

"Padre, leave us. Death comes; his mist is before me. Go now, that my brothers may prepare the way for . . ."

On Sunday he was buried. Over the stony way they carried him to the Campo Santo, their voices rising in mournful *sudarios*. It was a great man going to his rest.

TWO POEMS

BY A. J. M. SMITH

THE CREEK

Stones
still wet with cold black earth,
roots, whips of roots
and wisps of straw,
green soaked crushed leaves
mudsoiled
where hoof has touched them,
twisted grass
and hairs of herbs
that lip the ledge of the stream's edge:

these

then foamfroth, waterweed,
and windblown bits of straw
that rise, subside, float wide,
come round again, subside,
a little changed
and stranger, nearer
nothing:

these

THE SHROUDING

Unravel this curdled cloud,
Wash out the stain of the sun,
Let the winding of your shroud
Be delicately begun.

Bind up the muddy Thames,
Hearken the arrogant worm,
Sew the seams and the hems
With fine thread and firm.

When the moon is a sickle of ice
Reaping a sheaf of stars
Put pennies on your eyes,
Lie you down long and sparse.

Fold your thin hands like this,
Over your breast, so;
Protract no farewell kiss,
No ceremonial woe,

But stand up in your shroud
Above the crumbling bone,
Drawn up like one more cloud
Into the radiant sun.

THE GOD OF TIME

BY JOHN COWPER POWYS

THE impersonation of abstract ideas so that they should contend together like living combatants is a notable achievement in philosophic literature. To endow such impalpable notions with life, to segregate them into opposite camps of ferocious antipathy demands nothing less than a genuine mythopoeic imagination. It is a beguiling entertainment to sit in the colosseum-seats of Mr Lewis' arena and turn our thumbs up or down as we watch the struggle of these embodied essences.

That almost all the thinkers who wear, under Mr Lewis' magic touch, the tiger-stripes of the Time-Demon belong to our age while their antagonists, the great white elephants of Sacred Space, are summoned from more remote "fields of sleep" does not lessen the piquancy of this cosmic circus. Mr Lewis himself, like a nimble metaphysical Mowgli, mounted on the back sometimes of Parmenides, sometimes of Bishop Berkeley, herds his drowsy hieratic animals against these devilish heretics.

Never has appeared a more timely book than this vivid humorous attack upon the hypnotic rôle played by the mysterious entity *Time* in modern philosophy.¹ A formidable issue outlines itself and becomes more and more exciting as we read these startling pages. Two diametrically different ways of responding to the universal spectacle are here brought into a dramatic opposition such as would provoke Hegel to cold fury. *Being*, in fact, is here confronted with *Becoming* and subjected to a degree of lively antithesis such as these mystic ultimates have rarely known. On the one hand we plunge into a whirling chaotic stream of *musical-emotional* life-forces wherein both the ego and what the ego "looks at" lose their separate identity; wherein "Matter" melts into mind, mind into "matter," to the loss of all those distinctive eternal values which give the universe of human discourse its richest worth. On the other hand we entirely separate "dead matter" from the personal

¹ *Time and Western Man*. By Wyndham Lewis. 8vo. 469 pages. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$5.

"monad" which contemplates it; and, in harmony with the natural *spatializing imagination* of both plastic art and common sense, we allow the things contemplated to remain solid and substantial while the mind that contemplates them remains aloof in its psychic detachment. In other words the world of the Space-Orthodoxy is a cosmos of static calm—the calm of nature as we contemplate it with the eye of a pure artist or a pure scientist—while the world of the Time-Heresy is a chaos of feverish movement in which the difference between the observer and the observed is merged, fused, lost in a sub-human ecstasy of blind action and of blind emotion.

The earlier portions of Mr Lewis' book are especially directed against the literary allies of the Time-Devil; and it is here that he is at his best, so far as clairvoyant mischief is concerned. He is here at his worst too—in outrageous unkindness! Joyce one feels is strong enough to stand anything. Miss Stein will doubtless survive this humorous comparison with Anita Loos. But one winces at the cruelty—and indeed at the obvious irrelevance—of the attack upon Ezra Pound. Like other champions of a neglected orthodoxy Mr Lewis seems to permit, just here, certain black drops of personal spleen to poison his theological indignation. Why drag in Ezra Pound at all? The book's argument is weakened by this spiteful digression.

Perhaps the most subtle and penetrating portion of the work is that in which the author proves the real "unreality of Matter" to be better preserved by the static and plastic point of view which maintains the inanimate in its native purity, than by these Faustian wizards who make it swarm with an unseemly consciousness of its own. Such "Matter" is, Mr Lewis holds, much more a primal wonder when left to itself, in calm remoteness from the vagaries of the life-urge than when it is fused with human consciousness in what Russell calls a *neutral* state of existence. Just as the little girl does not want her doll to be anything but a doll, so Mr Lewis relucts at the thought of this magical pictorial non-human world being made to stir and shiver and throb with a life-pulse similar to our own.

"Surely," he says, "the famous spatializing instinct produces a more 'unreal world' (from the exactest physical standards) than does the *temporalizing* chronological instinct of a Bergson or an

Alexander. On a still day consider the trees in a forest or in a park, or an immobile castle reflected in a glassy river. They are perfect illustrations of our static dream; and what in a sense could be more 'unreal' than they? That is the external, objective, physical, material world, (made by our 'spatializing' sense) to which we are referring. It is to that world that the hellenic sculpture (which is the *bête noire* of Spengler) belongs, and all the Pharaohs and Buddhas as well, or even more.

"That is *our* world of 'matter,' which we place against the einsteinian, bergsonian, or alexandrian world of Time and 'restless interpenetration.' "

There is a tone of fine-impressioned seriousness in this passage which ought to be placed on record against all accusations of levity and irresponsibility brought against our author.

With the main contention of Time and Western Man many readers one feels, will find themselves in startled and surprised sympathy. It is indeed no small thing to have envisaged, from such a bird's-eye height of detachment, the most sinister direction of the flowing bubbles of modern philosophy.

It is by a very shrewd intuition that Lewis associates this modern disparagement of the "static" in nature with a diminution of the value of personality. One by one, as he acutely notes, the most characteristic elements of the individual soul are stripped away. In spite of their superficial obscurity our author finds all these modern philosophers saturated with popular sensationalism.

"Spengler affects to be an anti-popular writer. On exactly the same principle as Nietzsche—though of course without the latter's genius or thoroughness—he affects to be a writer by no means 'for the crowd.' "

But Mr Lewis is not to be humbugged. Behind the catchwords of all these time-servers he smells out the democratic rat.

"The handing over of your life to the community," he remarks, "is like resigning yourself to living in *bits*. . . . We live a conscious and magnificent life of the 'mind' at the expense of this community. . . . But in sympathy with the political movements

today, the tendency of scientific (in which is included philosophic) thought is *to hand back* to this vast community of cells this stolen aristocratical monopoly of personality which we call the 'mind.' 'Consciousness,' it is said, is (contrary to what an egotistic mental aristocratism tells us) not at all necessary."

This particular sentence is not only a crucial statement of Mr Lewis' criticism of the "popular" in modern thought. It is also an unfortunately good example of the popular element in Mr Lewis' own style. Never has a philosopher gone to work so slashingly, so savagely, so facetiously, or with such a contempt for the minor decencies of metaphysical ritual! Paradoxically it might almost seem that the weakest portions of this remarkable book are themselves the best argument in support of its main theme. I refer to the association of metaphysics with politics. Here surely Mr Lewis himself throws up his hands and sinks into the "time-space" flux. For one of the chief differences between what we call Being and what we call Becoming lies in the fecundity of historic detail spawned so profusely by the latter. Political conditions come and go, while the conscious Ego confronting the Spectacle of Nature remains an eternal fact.

EVENING

BY ORRICK JOHNS

Just before she comes
Lifting her great gray gown,
A discord rattles and hums
From end to end of the town.

Louder the mason's maul,
Shriller the children's cries;
The stark mad animals all
Complain with heavenly eyes.

The harsh pain of the road
Makes watchers blench and start,
And a finished episode
Beats hubbub in the heart.

A frenzy wags the bells,
And birds uncertainly cry,
When the old gray wife compels
Her flock to fold the eye.

The door of sight and sound
She'll hurry on to close,
Leaving on all the ground
The thing that no one knows.

And spread the web at last
Farther than we can mark . . .
Till late ones hurrying past
Are bits of separate dark.



Courtesy of the Kraushaar Gallery

ART LOVERS. BY GUY PÈNE DU BOIS

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IRISH LETTER

October, 1928

BY temperament hardly less than by force of circumstances your Irish Correspondent is disqualified from giving your readers any very satisfactory account of the proceedings at the Tailteann Games celebrations, the second since the institution of the new régime in Ireland. I am by nature a skulker, one whom nobody would dream of asking to take part in such festivities, and I suppose this exclusion (which I cannot complain of, since it is the choice of my soul) quickens to an unhealthy degree the disposition to pry beneath appearances; but to reassure myself I have only to remember my experience on various other public occasions: when, for instance, I have found myself defending a nation's homage to the Unknown Warrior against certain gallant participators in the Great War, who were inclined to sum up the whole thing as "bunkum." Shall I dare then to use the adjective which seems to me to be the secretly appropriate one for this Aonach Tailteann, in so far as it desires to celebrate the achievements of Ireland in literature during the last triennium? It is "pathetic"—pathetic in the innocent misapprehension of the significance of genius in a modern social community. It presupposes a community which rejoices in the appearance in its midst of genius, that is to say, of an incalculable human element which up to a certain point, no doubt, may be guided and applied to the enrichment and adornment of life, but is by its very nature dangerous to existing institutions: insomuch that we may almost say that any well-ordered state (witness Lacedaemon) is on the whole better without it. We may say certainly that in proportion to the decisiveness of its manifestation the existing order will have to adapt itself thereto, with the inevitable entailment of a good deal of worry and concern for many worthy folk. Yet a revival of the great triennial "Games" of ancient Ireland was a natural and happy idea, particularly in an age which gives at least as much attention to sport as any previous age; and a happy chance decreed that the interesting and romantic Gene Tunney should be a spectator of part of them and should distribute the awards for boxing. A great deal of business was done

at the ancient festivities besides the exhibitions of physical prowess; legislation was discussed and overhauled; distinguished strangers were invited to impart their wisdom; and it is even related that St Patrick, arriving while the games were in progress, took advantage of the opportunity to strike a decisive blow for Christianity.

There was authority therefore for extending the conception of athletics to the field of the mind; and even if Mr Bernard Shaw were not an Irishman, Ireland (so far as impersonated in the Tailteann committee) was quite within the tradition of the Festival in sending him an invitation to be present. It was however to receive the National Award in Imaginative Literature for Saint Joan, as the most distinguished work produced by an Irishman during the last three years, that Mr Shaw was invited to attend the celebrations. Future criticism will decide how far the cast of Shaw's mind is really Irish. Listening one night recently to a performance of *The Mikado*, the tone of it all at once reminded me of Shaw and set me thinking how Gilbertian after all is Shaw's mind, inasmuch that the Shavian drama was thereupon conceived of by me (I do not claim to have been very original in this) as an extension of the Gilbert "idea," the comic effects in the latter being heightened or at all events intensified and solidified by the substitution of set speeches for the lyric gaiety and light *badinage* of the opera. The disconcerting turns and the topsy-turvy transvaluation of values in Shaw's wit are certainly Gilbertian. For all I know, Gilbert may have had an Irish grandmother: if so, a strong case might undoubtedly be made out for a distinctively Irish genesis for Shaw's achievement. On the whole, however, it seems to me more reasonable to remember that the Irishman, and in particular the Anglo-Irishman, is an adaptable creature, rapidly assuming the characteristics of those peoples amongst which his lot is cast, so that in New York he soon establishes himself as a king of finance, or amongst Englishmen as a master of armies or of statecraft, or (should circumstances have led him to the writing of plays) as a manipulator for his own purposes of the humours and oddities of English life, which have only to be pointed out to a good-natured nation to make it laugh and hand out its largesse. When the President of the Royal Hibernian Academy therefore, in announcing the award to the absent Shaw—for Shaw, I should have told, returned a rather uncivil answer to the invita-

tion—took occasion to point out that "the outstanding qualities in his plays are indubitably Irish qualities," and that "his Irish wit, his Irish invective, his Irish sense of reality are the things which make his plays the masterpieces they are, which have caused them to be played the world over," he was, I think, not only making questionable statements, but leaving out of account the real endowment with which Shaw's native land may perhaps claim to have sent him forth into the world—his character. That character is indeed a great and memorable one: yet for the life of me I can see nothing Irish in the writing of Saint Joan any more than in the winning of Waterloo.

He was on surer ground when, addressing Senator Yeats, he said: "Though much poetry has been made in these later years by Irish writers, no other book than *The Tower*¹ was thought of when an award had to be made for the finest poetry written since last Aonach Tailteann. This award has been made to you for a book which, after forty years of literary creation, shows increasing rather than waning power." If there is a distinguished writer in these islands or even in the world at present, it is certainly Yeats, a man of a character equal in its way to that of Shaw, one who, as Standish O'Grady once said to me, would not go out of his way for an emperor. His whole life, with its artistic and patriotic consecration, rises up upon me, who sat on the same bench with him at school, like a rebuking phantom. Yet I could not help wondering what Yeats, the realist Yeats with whom one would talk presently, really thought of it all. He is at present engaged in resisting an impersonation of the spirit of Ireland very different from the Literary Committee of Aonach Tailteann—the proposed censorship, to consist of a committee of five arbiters appointed by the Ministry of Justice to hear complaints of any writing "which tends to inculcate principles contrary to public morality." It seems that one aim of the new measure is to prevent the spreading of knowledge about birth-control, and the State has a moral vision of its own in such matters, to which it is entitled. But what concerns literature is that a Minister of Justice should be entitled, as *The Manchester Guardian* says, to "put half the world's classics in prison." Literature in Ireland has before

¹ *The Tower*. By W. B. Yeats. 12mo. 110 pages. The Macmillan Company. \$2.25.

now come under the censure of the Church, but not till now has the civil authority contracted its brows so threateningly. Was I not right then in my intuitive perception of something "pathetic" underlying the assumption that a complete understanding, as between mother and son, prevails between a modern State and its poets?

The gold and silver medals in poetry were awarded respectively to Senator Gogarty and Mr Monk Gibbon. Senator Gogarty is another great character, the most genial and forthcoming personality in Dublin, who is spoken of as a future Governor-General, but there is nothing in the least "Irish" in his verse, in which he aims at a Roman rotundity of phrase, reminding one often not a little of Sir William Watson. I quote the last two stanzas of the title-poem of his volume, *Wild Apples*.

"It takes from the West Wind
The thrust of the main;
It makes from the tension
Of sky and of plain,
Of what clay enacted,
Of living alarm,
A vitalised symbol
Of earth and of storm,
Of Chaos contracted
To intricate form.

Unbreakable wrestler!
What sapling or herb
Has core of such sweetness
And fruit so acerb?
So grim a transmitter
Of life through mishap,
That one wonders whether
If that in the sap
Is sweet or is bitter,
Which makes it stand up."

"He might have rhymed," perhaps it will be said. As to Mr Monk Gibbon, it would be somewhat difficult, I feel, to convince readers of *THE DIAL* of his quality by quotation, but is there not a

union of moral seriousness with Blake-like simplicity in this little poem, *The Gods*?

"The gods are dead, they tell us now,
None walk the earth as they once did
Yet each may be a god who wills,
And none prevent him, none forbid.

A penny given to a child
Can turn a sky of grey to gold,
Two pennies given make his heart
Leap with the joy of wealth untold.

Now am I Mercury, if I wish,
Now am I Zeus, if I so choose,
Now can I bring Olympus down
To this next mortal lacking shoes.

He passes me, the chance is gone;
The god's winged feet o'erlook his need;
Olympus clouds again with mist.
What men proclaim is true indeed."

JOHN EGLINTON

BOOK REVIEWS

FROM THE FOUNDING OF THE CITY

LIVY. Volumes I-IV. Books I-X. *With an English Translation by B. O. Foster. 16mo. The Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$2.50 each volume.*

IT is useful to read as a comment upon these ten books of Livy the second book of Mommsen's History of Rome, especially the chapters on The Beginning of Rome, The Non-Burgesses and the Reformed Constitution, The Tribune of the Plebs and the Decemvirate, The Subjugation of the Latins, the Struggle of the Italians Against Rome. Mommsen shows us the effects of what Livy describes—the effects of epoch-making wars waged against states twenty miles from Rome, of the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary struggle constantly going on in the city, of the extraordinary measures taken and the extraordinary appointments made every few decades, of the leagues and alliances which Rome and Rome's enemies enter into. Mommsen maps what Livy describes for us.

Livy, naturally, had no conception of history in our modern sense of the term: he is not thinking of a society developing in various ways—in arts and philosophy, in political institutions and principles of law. He describes events only. He never makes a statement about Roman policy. We read him now, not as history, but as epic—the epic of the unfolding of Roman power.

And we cannot understand any modern history of Rome unless we are familiar with Livy. For Livy shows us what kind of character was behind all this war and policy. He is always providing incidents which illustrate this character. He even lets us see Roman character from the other side, as it appears to their opponents, when he lets the spokesman for the brave and honourable Samnite people say to the Roman emissary:

"Let the Roman People not blame the pledge given by the consuls, nor let us blame the honour of the Roman People. Will you never, when you have been beaten, lack excuses for not holding to your covenants? You gave hostages to Porsinna—and withdrew them by a trick. You ransomed your City from the Gauls with gold—and cut them down as they were receiving the gold. You pledged us peace, on condition that we gave you back your captured legions—and you nullify the peace. And always you contrive to give the fraud some colour of legality. Does the Roman People not approve the preservation of its legions by a disgraceful peace? Let it keep its peace, and give back the captured legions to the victor; that would be conduct worthy of its promise, its covenants, its fetial ceremonies. . . . Aye, go to war, since Spurius Postumius has just now jostled the envoy with his knee! So shall the gods believe that Postumius is a Samnite—not a Roman—citizen, and that a Roman envoy has been maltreated by a Samnite, and that you, in consequence of this, have justly made war on us! Does it not shame you to bring forth into the light of day these mockeries of religion, and, old men and consulars as you are, to devise such quibbles to evade your promise as were scarce worthy of children? Go, lictor, strike their fetters from the Romans; let no man hinder them from departing when they list."

This is the reverse of all simplicity, shrewdness, piety, and far-sightedness which Livy is always illustrating—the character which permitted the nobles and farmers living in and around a little hill town to beat down every other power in Italy and then to take possession of the Mediterranean world. The four volumes published in the Loeb Library contain an unbroken narrative—Livy's first ten books. The story begins with the founding of the City and ends with Rome's final subjugation of the Latins, and with the defeat of the bravest of the Italian stocks, the Samnites, and the disruption of Etruria—"that great empire extending from sea to sea." Meanwhile, Rome has fallen to the Celts who have sold their victory for gold, and within their own walls the Romans have heard said to them the dire words that they had often said, that they were often to say to others—*vae victis*.

There are no portraits in these books: these consuls, dictators, military tribunes, masters of the horse, have all the same features

and they all speak in the same style. They are representative of the Roman as Citizen. In their good and their evil fortune they are working out the destiny of the Children of Mars. They fight and they debate. Always they seem to be marching. And their humour and poetry come to them on the march. Always we are hearing about the ribald verses and the rude jests that the soldiers fling at their commanders as they march through the City in their triumph. In this masculine epic women have even less place than in the *Iliad*—Lucretia and Verginia, victims of men who have not the restraints of citizenship, are as shadowy as Briseis; have the pathos that the masculine European gives to women seen as the faithful wife or the cherished daughter. The women have a decorum, a devotion to the family which is the state in little, which are complementary to the men's decorum and devotion; they, too, speak as in the senate or the forum. There is the Verginia who on behalf of the Plebeian woman dedicates an altar to Modesty. "Verginia boasted, and with reason, that she had entered the temple of Patrician Modesty both as a patrician and a modest woman, as having been wedded to the one man to whom she had been given as a maiden, and was neither ashamed of her husband nor of his honours and his victories." She uses such words:

"I dedicate this altar to Plebeian Modesty; and I urge you, that even as the men of our state contend for the meed of valour, so that matrons may vie for that of modesty, that this altar may be said to be cherished—if it be possible—more reverently than that, and by more modest women."

Livy has a profound and noble conception of life—a conception which his Romans held: there is Genius and there is Fortune—the Genius of the individual, the Fortune of the state; Genius and Fortune are inherent in the man and the state, but for Genius, for Fortune, to manifest itself requires intelligence, power and will from the individual and from individuals. It is this conception of Genius and Fortune that gives such steadfastness to Roman conduct and such dignity to Roman utterances.

But like all people who have a sense of their own destiny, the Romans put on a good deal of solemn humbuggery; they must have seemed comic to certain peoples whom they came in contact with.

One hopes that the Celts of Brennus' time had a sense of humour. Three serious young men come down from Rome to ask them "what conceivable right they had to demand land of its occupants under threat of war, and what business Gauls had in Etruria." The Gauls had not been long in Italy, but probably long enough to have heard of the Romans as the most expansive people thereabouts—they had just taken Veii and were dividing up its lands. Then the lecturers on international law went into battle against the men who had received them as ambassadors. The Roman Senate and the Roman People refused to discipline their envoys: for that they had to buy back their City with a thousand pounds of gold.

There are memorable battle-pictures in Livy, but the picture that one must always remember is that of the Roman army trapped in the Caudine Forks and unable to fight or to retreat:

"At this they came to a halt, without any command, and a stupor came over the minds of all, and a strange kind of numbness over their bodies; and looking at one another—for every man supposed his neighbour more capable of thinking and planning than himself—they stood for a long time motionless and silent. Afterwards, when they saw the tents of the consuls going up and some of the men getting out entrenching tools, although they perceived that in their desperate plight, deprived of every hope, it would be ridiculous for them to entrench themselves, nevertheless, that they might not add a fault to their misfortunes, they fell to digging—each for himself with no encouragement or command for anyone—and fortified a camp close to the water; meanwhile not only did their enemies insolently scoff at them, but they jested themselves, with pathetic candour, at the futility of their works and the pains they took. The dejected consuls did not even call a council, for the situation admitted neither of discussion nor of help, but the lieutenants and tribunes assembled of their own accord, and the soldiers, turning to the headquarters tent, called on their generals for help, which the immortal gods could scarce have given them."

And then the scene after the legions had passed under the yoke:

"On emerging from the pass, although they seemed like men raised from the dead, who beheld for the first time the light of day, yet

the very light itself, which allowed them to see that dismal throng was gloomier than any death. . . . Yet the kindness of their allies and their friendly looks and words were so far from drawing the Romans into talk that they could not even be got to raise their eyes or look their friends and comforters in the face; so constrained were they by a kind of humiliation—over and above their grief—to avoid the speech and assemblages of men."

Professor Foster's translation makes a fine narrative in English—fluent but with an arresting movement. The translation is announced as being in thirteen volumes; the next set issued will have Livy's account of the second Punic War. What is between—Pyrrhus' invasion of Italy and the first encounters with the Carthaginians—is amongst the world's lost books.

PADRAIC COLUM

IMPASSE AND IMAGERY

THE BOY IN THE SUN. By Paul Rosenfeld. 12mo.
266 pages. The Macaulay Company. \$2.

"JEW he is, being like Judaism, which was the father of Christianity, the dark and massive materialistic religion that engendered the ivory-white faith which was all spirit, the religion of burnt offerings and vows of vengeance to which in times of stress men and peoples return, letting the new faith die."

This is not Rosenfeld, but an image from a recent article by Rebecca West.

No. In the modern world we neither rise up from Judaism nor return to it. We do something else. So does David. I remember Paul Rosenfeld, in 1922 I think it was, standing up nervously on the platform of The Wanamaker Store Auditorium one winter's afternoon and reading a paper in defence of E. E. Cummings' *The Enormous Room*, attacking the publishers of the book for their evident neglect to back it as they should. This is the same spirit that animates "Divvy" before the impasse which life presents to him.

When we Scotch and the rest say "people," we mean ourselves. When under stress we give up the lightly held precepts of Christianity which have nothing integral to do with us, we return not to Judaism, but to our native paganism. That is why we detest the Jew, to whom Christianity would be natural, and from whom it sprang. We hate him because of a racial instinct, because he confirms in us our own bastardy.

It's a good story, all about a little Jewish boy that grew up in New York. It starts in scenes of Old Testament violence, but comes out in the end on the banks of the Hudson River in April. As to the writing —? But who cares about the writing of a novel so long as the story moves and is interesting?

I think *The Boy in the Sun* contains about the best writing Rosenfeld has done to date. No doubt of it. And when he falls down I think this book discloses the cause. He is trying for an extremely

difficult colour differentiation and naturally, especially in English and in America, this is no cinch. I admire a man who aims for a difficult veracity of style. Nor will I acknowledge that I am influenced by the memory of The Wanamaker Auditorium and Rosenfeld's ceaseless impersonal activity in the New York field for what he believes fine.

The writing *is* good, when it is good. That is to say it is still beset with old faults of emotional daubing which makes it sometimes—to me—entirely undecipherable. I dislike intransitive verbs used transitively. I dislike "twilit." But then again the sentences are crisp, yet the imagery remains delicate, diaphanous, silky, and full of light. The evocation of the girl seen in the park of Evelyn in the theatre box, could not be more precisely yet delicately true. There is no sentimentality, but a sensitive, excellently drawn image.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

A RUSSIAN IN JAPAN

KORNI YAPONSKAVO SOLNTSA (Roots of the Japanese Sun). By Boris Pilniak. 186 pages. Leningrad: Priboy. 1r.50c.

NOTHING written about Japan since Lafcadio Hearn is so rich in interest as this small volume by a young Russian novelist whose work is not wholly unknown to the English-reading public. His fiction is good; but this, an authentic book of travel, is better. The writer confesses to a serious handicap: an ignorance of Japanese; this lack is more than compensated for by a vivid power of observation, keen analysis, and an enquiring mind capable of advantageously correlating the facts at hand. Above all, he possesses a sense of history, in this instance a double-edged gift, since it allows him to answer some vital questions concerning the most progressive of the Eastern races, yet urges him to the asking of other questions for which he has no answer. But the putting of relevant questions serves a function by no means to be despised. Pilniak frankly sees in Japan a mystery; he expounds the nature of the mystery in a series of pictures, episodes, encounters, and reinforces what he has seen and heard with his own mental and emotional reactions—valuable because, in spite of the confusion to which they have subjected the author (or, perhaps, because of it!) they do juxtapose with graphic lucidity the Western and Eastern aspects of things.

"Japan," says Pilniak, "is our outstanding refutation of Spengler's theory; for it is a land which has already existed a thousand years, a contemporary of Greece, and a niece of Assyria and Egypt."

The mystery is this: how could the little nation manage to learn and adopt in so short a time all that Europe had to teach it in the way of mechanization and thought, yet keep its own ancient character and integrity? The mind of Japan—that is, the mind that was, before Commodore Peary, the American, and Admiral Putinin, the Russian, used their squadrons to force that country's gates open to the world—has remained changeless and closed to the European. Externally, the changes have been little short of

cataclysmic; there has been a whole-hearted adoption of Western machinery; in such devices the Japanese are not a whit behind us. Yet there has been no perceptible change in Japanese psychology. While the Westerners live and build in affirmation of the future, the Japanese base all their actions on the past. "It is a land of corpses; corpses are in command here"—so that when the students of Tokyo University were given a questionnaire as to what they intended to do with their future, the immense majority declared that they were Socialists and wanted to bring children into the world *worthy of their ancestors*. Nevertheless, these "corpses" are unusually active and have achieved their present place in the world by sheer will-power. While keeping their counsel, they have deliberately set out to learn all that Europe and America have to teach them. There is not a little irony in the fact that the two nations most assiduously watched by them are the United States and Russia. "From America," writes Pilniak, "Japan wants to take her machines; from us, Russians, her spiritual culture." She is avidly consuming Russian books in translation; hardly a classic or contemporary work of note but has been translated into Japanese. The Communist author feels shamefaced before his brothers in Nippon, for he knows that not one of them would undertake a journey into Russia without having learned the language first.

What does Japan intend to do with her newly gained power? For notwithstanding Spengler, this aged nation, far from being decrepit as she should be, is showing every indication of youth. She is, in fact, that extraordinary thing so rarely met with: youth—with the assimilated experience of age. (It is in the matter of this singular combination that Spengler breaks down.) But the riddle of Japan's destination is unanswered by Pilniak. He can only reiterate graphic instances to show that the riddle exists. But we would not have any of them away. They make the book, and we read on, for the most part oblivious of the ultimate problem that the author has so much at heart, and never solves.

More than one episode points to what is, perhaps, the supreme virtue of the Japanese: self-control. There is its attendant quality: courage. Jarrings from volcanoes, always in readiness, have through many generations trained the people to face danger in a mood of fatalistic calm. Native eye-witnesses have described to the author scenes from the terrible catastrophe in 1923.

"The first movement of the Japanese in the earthquake was not to move at all, but to look around, decide, *organize the nerves*. Those forty thousand who perished on one of the Tokyo squares perished thus: all around them were burning houses, they were being showered with flaming firebrands, they were being smothered by the flames. . . . There was no way of escape. When, after the conflagration, the survivors went to look for the dead, they found the blackened corpses lying in perfect order . . . under the corpses were found live children. The adults, *organizing* their last moments, had died without panic, almost without panic, and with their charred bodies had saved their children. . . ."

This is in keeping with the Japanese scorn of individual death. When the prisoners of war returned to their native land after the Russo-Japanese war they were subjected to contempt for "not having found time to drive a sword into their bowels"; even their own families refused to have anything to do with them.

Pilniak has a great deal to say of Japanese writers, at whose invitation he had come to Japan. The encounter with Titia-san is especially interesting. They had been drinking *saké* together and when the drink had made the company convivial one of the authors, acting as interpreter, interpreted for Titia-san:

"The father of Titia-san had been killed by a Russian at Mukden, during the Russo-Japanese war. Titia-san, then a boy, had made a vow to avenge his father by killing the first Russian he happened to meet. The first Russian he has met is yourself. He ought to kill you. But he, Titia-san, is a writer—and you are a writer. He, Titia-san, knows that the brotherhood of art is above blood. And so he suggests that you drink *saké* with him in brotherly fashion, according to the Japanese custom, by exchanging cups—in memory of the fact that he, Titia-san, has broken his vow. . . ."

In this connexion, an absorbing chapter deals with the literature and art of Japan, especially the theatre. We learn that the most revolutionary theatre of Japan is the theatre of Osanai-san, which would nowadays be considered reactionary in Russia, since the method pursued is that of Stanislavsky in the Moscow Art

Theatre. On the other hand, the whole tendency of the most revolutionary theatre in Russia—that of Meyerhold—is in the direction of the traditional theatre of Japan. Again, the inevitable historic irony. When East and West meet, they exchange virtues.

Pilniak has some amusing things to tell of his brief stay in China. He appeared on the platform to deliver a lecture, when a policeman politely told him that he might sing or dance but not speak. As a way out of his dilemma, a Chinese seriously suggested that he sing his lecture; but the author could scarcely see the matter in that light, and retired crestfallen.

JOHN CURNOS

MR ELIOT'S FAVOURITE

THE MOONSTONE. By Wilkie Collins. With an Introduction by T. S. Eliot. 18mo. 522 pages. The World's Classics. Oxford University Press, American Branch. 80 cents.

IN the opening sentence of his introduction, Mr Eliot says that "The Moonstone is the first, the longest, and the best of modern English detective novels." As it is the first and was published in 1868, and as the detective novel is considered to have had no ancient form, the use of the word "modern" seems superfluous. Mr Eliot, however, is not a wasteful writer, and I suspect that the word was chosen to startle the reader into following out its implication: that *The Moonstone* is a greater detective novel than any of the popular favourites of the past thirty years, including *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and the latest offerings of the Crime Club.

Almost all the rest of the introduction deals with the literary relationship between Collins and Dickens and with some of the less known works of the former. Toward the end Mr Eliot repeats his first remark and enlarges on it:

"We may even say that everything that is good and effective in the modern detective story can be found in *The Moonstone*. Modern detective writers have added the use of fingerprints and such other trifles, but they have not materially improved upon either the personality or the methods of Sergeant Cuff. Sergeant Cuff is the perfect detective. Our modern detectives are most often either efficient but featureless machines, forgotten the moment we lay the book down, or else they have too many features, like Sherlock Holmes. Sherlock Holmes is so heavily weighted with abilities, accomplishments, and peculiarities, that he becomes almost a static figure; he is described to us rather than revealed in his actions. Sergeant Cuff is a real and attractive personality, and he is brilliant without being infallible."

This is sound criticism and indicates the point at which contemporary detective novels diverge, to their own disadvantage, from *The Moonstone*. They fail to keep up the purely fictional side of their existence; they are not interesting reading apart from the solution of the mystery they propound. The early Conan Doyle stories seem to me exceptions; either because I have forgotten the answer in the short stories or because the stories are really good reading, I find myself returning to the first and second series with real zest; and am conscious of a great desire to read *The Hound of the Baskervilles* again. Holmes, himself, is a schoolboy's hero, just as Philo Vance is a hero for the half-intelligent; the method of each of these detectives is far superior to his character. But in most of the other detective stories one reads, the ingenuity of the writer has been so exhausted on intricacies of plot, that there are no characters and the writers confess their inability to create a credible figure by giving their narrators or detectives or principals oddities of speech, or little quirks of personality, or an exotic background, when their simple job is to make them human beings. Even Father Brown becomes occasionally a bag of Chestertonian ideas, although at his best he brings a rare thing into this type of fiction; that is, he discovers a crime because he is the man he is, working on morals and character, and the crime can usually be traced to character and ideas in the criminal. It is much better than elaborate motivation.

S. S. Van Dine has announced that a murder is essential to a detective novel, and *The Moonstone* is the perfect retort to be hurled at his pseudonymous head. For *The Moonstone* begins with the loss of a jewel. A young woman has every reason to believe that the man she loves has stolen it, yet she cannot tell him so; he, unconscious of her suspicion, tries to discover the thief and to return to her good graces. The whole thing revolves upon several axes, each a moral problem, the most highly organized being that of an unhappy servant-girl who shares her mistress's suspicion and acts in the contrary sense, to shield the man she also loves. It is a beautiful tangle and in approaching the *dénouement* one must not be disappointed to find it the inevitable. (I refrain from mentioning it, in case the readers of this review are coming to *The Moonstone*, as I did two years ago, with no knowledge of the solution. Re-reading it just now I found the entire thing holding my attention as insistently as before.) The solution comes near to being a

trick and one finds it unsatisfactory chiefly because it has been used, with less justification, a thousand times since. Considering the state of the science of psychology in Collins' time, it is the inevitable way out for this book.

The idea that nothing less than a murder will do to hold attention is another instance of the abdication of the detective-novel writer. In *The Moonstone* the diamond itself is made interesting by the prologue giving its bloody history and giving, as Mr Eliot says, the sense of fatality for the whole book. Two distinct characters, each treated with irony and with Dickensian humours, appear as rivals for the heroine's hand: again the story interest is good—not merely the love interest, but the solution of the question, Which one will she choose? *The Moonstone* is about four times as long as the average detective novel of to-day, and in that space Collins could develop character; but to say that our modern novelists are held down by space is absurd: *Vanity Fair* is surely three times as long as *The House of Mirth*. I suspect that for all their insistence to the contrary, even the best practitioners of the detective novel look down on it, in the sense that they do not think it necessary to supply it with the essentials of any other type of novel.

The current practice of the detective novel can be defended only on a single assumption: that it differs essentially from any other type of fiction. The short stories of Edgar Allan Poe did differ: they were the anatomy of detection, with only enough flesh and blood (the negro humour in *The Gold Bug*, e.g.) to carry them along. Ideally one ought to be able to write a detective story with characters A, B, C, and D, and, of course, X as the criminal; they could take place in abstractions of place and time, and only such things as affected the crime or its solution would be specifically described. Actually, we demand some sense of reality.

The Moonstone gives it to us. For me there is a surfeit of characterization. The story is told in a series of narratives in the first person, requiring the writer to develop the character of each narrator. The remarkable thing is that not only the style, but the sort of thing told, changes with each person—in that respect the method is a great success. But each narrator insists too much on his or her own peculiarities; the tract-scattering Miss Clack, probably as amusing in her time as a woman Prohibitionist would be in ours, is particularly overdone.

With that reservation, I agree entirely with Mr Eliot's high

opinion of *The Moonstone*, although I cannot say it is the best because I have not read some of the most famous claimants to that title. If the reader will turn from the new introduction to the one written by the author himself, he will find further justification for his interest. "In some of my former novels," says Collins, "the object proposed has been to trace the influence of circumstance upon character. In the present story I have reversed the process. The attempt made here is to trace the influence of character on circumstances. The conduct pursued, under a sudden emergency, by a young girl, supplies the foundation on which I have built this book."

This means, essentially, that a moral problem is the spring of action; and a practising novelist of considerable standing considered one of his novels, in which a detective appears in order to solve a mystery, no different from any other of his novels. Perhaps that is why *The Moonstone* remains so good. Certainly it is why a hundred or a thousand other writers have borrowed from it some of their most engaging features: Cuff is the father of all detectives who have hobbies, from Holmes to Philo Vance; Rosanna Spearman is the progenitor of thousands of servant-girls with dubious pasts; Franklin Blake is all *jeune premier*; the butler, Miss Clack, the lawyer, the Indian jugglers, the little boy called Gooseberry, and the pious Godfrey Ablewhite have all appeared endlessly in detective stories. Often they have been good; never better than they are in *The Moonstone*.¹

GILBERT SELDES

¹ I have made the point about obligatory murder elsewhere and have, since writing this review received a note from Willard Huntington Wright, who speaks with authority about S. S. Van Dine. "You are," he says, "perfectly right about murder being unnecessary for a short detective story. When Van Dine set down the rules he had a full-length novel in mind. . . . The fact is, Van Dine is trying, in his various criticisms, to draw a sharp line between the pure detective story and the mystery and adventure story." The effort is laudable. Mr Wright rejects *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which I had used as an example, on the ground that "there is a death, amounting to murder" in *The Hound*; but I do not see how he can get around *The Moonstone*. The problem for the detective to solve in *The Moonstone* is the disappearance of a jewel. The death at the end of the story is an incident in the process of detection. And *The Moonstone* is a full-length novel strictly in the canon of detective fiction.

BRIEFER MENTION

THE ROMANCE OF LEONARDO DA VINCI, by Dmitri Merejkowski (16mo, 637 pages; The Modern Library: 95 cents) has taken its place among the monumental achievements of historical romance. "The soul of the artist must be like unto a mirror, which reflects all objects, all movements and all colors, remaining itself unmoved and clear." These words, attributed to Leonardo, seem to express the underlying secret of Merejkowski's power, enabling him to reflect an entire epoch within the frame of a novel. The present translation—by Bernard Guilbert Guerney—has been made from the Russian original, rather than from French versions.

IN THE MIDST OF LIFE, by Ambrose Bierce, with an introduction by George Sterling (16mo, 403 pages; Modern Library: 95 cents). The tales of soldiers and civilians set forth here well represent the massive and morose genius of Bierce. Perhaps not all of his best work is included, but certainly there is enough to exhibit distinctly the character of mind and temperament that produced it—the elaborate realism, the gruesome brilliant imagination, the bitter nonchalance. The sum is a power of effect not readily paralleled in literature.

THE BEST CONTINENTAL SHORT STORIES OF 1927, edited by Richard Eaton (12mo, 254 pages; Dodd, Mead: \$2.50). Mr Eaton proves himself a most sagacious discriminator. His method of choice is as sound as his taste is shrewd; and both are exerted here to an admirable issue. There is indeed a quite especial interest in a comparison between the divergent racial "traits" as one reads these tales; and the Editor, we feel, has done well in selecting such stories as on the whole have a rural rather than a city atmosphere.

THE HAPPY MOUNTAIN, by Maristan Chapman (12mo, 313 pages; Viking Press: \$2.50) has, according to Carl Van Doren (quoted on the jacket) skill, charm, and significance. All three are corrupted by the author's failure to think out the aesthetic problem presented by a book dealing with mountaineers, who talk a strange language—essentially the problem of treating an exotic so that it does not seem exotic to the people involved. One feels the mountaineers saying "How Shakespearean I speak and how odd I am."

TWELVE MEN, by Theodore Dreiser (18mo, 360 pages; The Modern Library: 95 cents). It is with great satisfaction that lovers of Dreiser will welcome their favourite *Twelve Men* in this convenient and agreeable shape. This way of describing actual characters in the projected relief and with the vivid verisimilitude of fiction seems a literary form that might be exploited further. One feels, in the light of his later work, that this book is a tangled yarn of all the threads of Dreiser's loom, blending in its fabric the tender sentiment of *Jenny Gerhardt* with something of the stark realism of *An American Tragedy*.

JACK KELSO, a Dramatic Poem, by Edgar Lee Masters (10mo, 264 pages; Appleton: \$2.50). The author of *Spoon River Anthology* was, we feel, no less happily inspired when he selected this comprehensive subject than when he chose this sturdy and flexible form of rhymed verse. In our opinion this quaint and sardonic commentary upon American history is both more amusing and more revealing than the more pretentious "Epic" of Mr Benét which covers much of the same ground. The mordant sarcasm which prevails in this book is relieved here and there by some really poignant imaginative strokes.

ENGLISH VERSE, chosen and arranged by W. Peacock, Vol. I, *The Early Lyrics to Shakespeare* (18mo, 541 pages; Oxford University Press: 80 cents). In the preface to this first of five volumes to be issued as a companion work to the *Oxford Selections of English Prose*, the anthologist reminds us that "'the best is the best though a hundred judges have declared it so,'" and if one misses this or that—if Skelton's lines on Phyllyp Sparowe seem a shade better than those on the sparrow and the cat, and nothing is better than Henryson's taill of the lyoun and the mous, it is evident to the reader that "skilfull might gae many sparkes of blisse." The irresistible attractiveness of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and intervening authors, could not be suggested, one feels, with more bouquet-like enticement than here.

MINSTRELSY OF MAINE, Folk-Songs and Ballads of the Woods and the Coast, collected by Fannie H. Eckstorm and Mary W. Smyth (10mo, 390 pages; Houghton Mifflin: \$3.50). The fruits evidently justify the labours of enthusiasm through more than a few years that must have gone into the collection and editing of these numerous folk-songs. Whether the reader accept or not the editor's view that poetry is "the way you feel about a thing," he is bound to be entertained and absorbed in being so close to the uncomplicated jubilation of these sailors and loggers as he gets in such songs as *The Little Brown Bulls*, *Canday-I-O*, *The Little Barber*, *The Wesley Shackers*, *The Banks of Newfoundland*. That this is possible is due not alone to the songs themselves, but to the setting of local reference afforded in many cases by the indefatigable researches of the editors and the co-operation of the numerous contributors. The book merits a place in any collection which includes such volumes as Sandburg's *American Songbag*, or Lomax's *Cowboy Songs*, or Louise Pound's *American Ballads and Songs*.

FIVE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY COMEDIES, selected and edited by Allardyce Nicoll (18mo; *The World's Classics*, Oxford University Press, American Branch: 80 cents) presents five comedies of the time of Garrick and "may provide at least an outline background for the work of Goldsmith and Sheridan." Moments in each are amusing and in each a character, an episode, or an attitude indicates to us where some of the stock characters of comedy and melodrama, of our own time, stem from. But on the whole they are not very entertaining and only one, *Speed the Plough*, the comedy in which Mrs Grundy so magnificently fails to appear in person, is good reading throughout.

THE CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE AND MODERN LIFE (8vo, 213 pages; University of Colorado: \$2) contains addresses by Roscoe Pound, F. J. E. Woodbridge, Robert A. Millikan, Paul Shorey, Lorado Taft, and Francis J. McConnell, the occasion being the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the University of Colorado. The discourses bear rather miscellaneously on the general topic, Professor Millikan's asserting the adequacy of the scientific standpoint to modern problems, be they material or moral, while Professor Shorey's reiterates the necessity and value of the classics. Perhaps the least stereotyped addresses in this somewhat tepid series are Dean Pound's *The Social Order and Modern Life*, and Dean Woodbridge's *Philosophy and Modern Life*. Dean Pound gives a well furnished account of relativity and growth in the social order, while Dean Woodbridge submits that the contribution of philosophy to modern life, or any life, is its assistance to man in distinguishing and knowing his own mind.

REMBRANDT, A Romance of Divine Love and Art, by Sándor Bródy, translated from the Hungarian by Louis Rittenberg (12mo, 257 pages; Globus Press: \$2.50). Into this striking "Imaginary Portrait" Bródy has thrown so intense a magnetic power that its hot, feverish grossness is subsumed under its passionate tenderness. Mr Rittenberg has translated it so adroitly from the Hungarian that it is hard for the most scrupulous Rembrandt-lover to reluct at the book's nervous and shameless gusto. As the personalities revealed in the famous pictures slip out from behind their frames, and as the ecstatic painter inebriates himself with their life, and with the life of the inanimate things about them, one feels that, right or wrong in biographical detail, these naively impassioned pages do catch something of the vagabond frenzy of the great artist's vision.

THE LIFE AND PRIVATE HISTORY OF EMILY JANE BRONTE, by Romer Wilson (8vo, 281 pages; A. & C. Boni: \$4). Miss Romer Wilson expresses herself with individuality and force. Her enthusiasm for her subject compensates one for a certain immaturity and provincialism in her manner of writing, a lack of polish and philosophical detachment. Hers is a personal interpretation, and as such it does succeed in leaving in one's mind a vivid and moving impression of the singular and passionate girl whom the author informs us had "a man's soul in a female body."

GOETHE, The History of the Man, by Emil Ludwig (8vo, 646 pages; Putnam: \$5). Devotees of Goethe will read this lively condensation of the German "Life" with very mingled feelings. The translator's use of such expressions as "buck up" and "hot air" will increase the aesthetic discomfort already produced by an over-emphasis upon the love-affairs, by the singularly inappropriate dedication, by the over-compression of philosophic material, by the melodramatic repetition of the word "Daemonic"; all of which peculiarities, though doubtless intended as concessions to the English-speaking reader, do detract from the book's worth. Against this, however, must be placed certain illuminating revelations as to the basic inconsistencies of Goethe's character; a character which certainly emerges from these crowded pages in sharp and startling, if not in altogether attractive outlines.

THE PRAGMATIC REVOLT IN POLITICS, by W. Y. Elliott (8vo, 540 pages; Macmillan: \$3.75) presents what must appear a well taken thesis in political criticism; namely, that such modern panaceas as communism, syndicalism, fascism—all of them, in the author's view, the fruits or perversions of pragmatic philosophy—come very much short of meeting the needs of men in community, since such dogmas are concerned too extensively with the mechanics of social organization and too slightly, if at all, with those questions of "moral personality" which are vital to the durable social economy of human beings. It is important, the author contends, "to accept with good will the necessary subordination of our wants to community of purpose," but at the same time "to insist upon the freedom of individuals to weigh that purpose in every group. Only by the protection of the rights of free moral personality can the creative forces of the human spirit be loosed." Informed and wise as this point of view is, however, the lay reader is bound to be somewhat oppressed by the unemphatic, bemusing redundancy of the argument. The materials of a trenchant discourse could doubtless be selected from these 500 overworded pages, but as they stand they must seem addressed primarily to specialists.

A HISTORY OF PRINTING, Its Development Through Five Hundred Years, by John Clyde Oswald (8vo, 404 pages; Appleton: \$7.50). A book primarily intended for bibliophiles and virtuosos in the art of printing, this beautifully illustrated volume includes so many lively biographical details about the early printers that it has much interest for the layman. The extension of the art from its beginnings in Strasburg, Augsburg, Nuremberg, Cologne, to Venice and Paris is emphasized in significant facsimiles of format and ornament until the clearness of the Latin and Greek types of the Aldus Press becomes an astonishing revelation to the uninitiated. The vivid sketch of the personality of Aldus Manutius surpasses anything recorded of the other great printers, from Badius and Froben to Baskerville and Morris; and as one notes how much more readable is Aldus' Greek and Latin than Caxton's English, one closes this engaging book with added veneration for the incomparable Venetian.

THE FUTURE OF AN ILLUSION, by Sigmund Freud, translated by W. D. Robson-Scott, Number 15 of The International Psycho-Analytical Library, edited by Ernest Jones (8vo, 98 pages; Hogarth Press, 6s: Horace Livright, \$2) considers the psychological importance of religious ideas in the preservation of cultures, and concludes that in the past they have been invaluable in reconciling the masses of men, both to the uncertainties of their physical destiny and to the necessary repression of individual instincts upon which every genuine civilization is premised. Now, however, in the opinion of the author, religious ideas are deprived of efficacy, since the advance of knowledge has shown them to be illusions—in fact a form of neurosis, to be eliminated only by proper education of the individual at the proper season. The first part of the essay is a concise and admirable account of the psychological conditions of civilization, but the rest is prolegomena and declarative notes rather than the consecutive, or persuasive, development of a thesis. Professor Freud has been fortunate in his translator.

THE THEATRE

IN the midst of the silly mechanisms of the early theatre season, *MACHINAL* confronts you suddenly with life. I do not mean the somewhat overvalued quality of dealing with life—the play does that with varying success in various scenes; but the play itself has vitality, it has energy and passion. It has to do with a woman who knows peace twice in her life: once when she commits adultery and once when she commits murder. The first is perfectly explained in the play, the second is a logical absurdity which the passion of the play somehow conceals.

The play is riddled with faults—of method, of intelligence, of production. It triumphs over them by the power of virtues which are, in all probability, the positive side of its lapses. In this brief note (I saw the play after the rest of this report was written and am hurrying in this addition) I cannot give details. But, for example, the method—from German expressionism—runs through American condensation of effect, touches realism, and ends in poetry; at times each of these is effective, at times not. The character of the woman is not fully realized and, as played by Miss Zita Johann, lacks variety—she becomes Miss Cornell in one scene extended to a play. The lecherous Babbitt's poetic impulse in love is neglected in order to make him repulsive. In most plays such a collection of defects would be ruinous; in *MACHINAL* they seem to be swept away by the tempest of feeling which Miss Treadwell has written into the lines, with exceptional dramatic sense, and by the rhythm given to the production by Mr Hopkins. The play ends with an electrocution, reported in a few brief sentences in the dark. Then slowly light floods the stage—light and colour, apparently without source or motion. The sense of torture is appeased, the sense of pity remains. And it carries the play to its true conclusion, since it brings peace. It is perhaps my prejudice to credit this supreme dramatic effect to Mr Robert Edmond Jones, who designed the settings with his perfect feeling for style and has built again and again the prison of four walls in which the action takes place, until the action is

in a prison, and he has pushed aside his walls to make place for darkness and for light.

Missing the opening of *THE FRONT PAGE*¹ by a day or two, I found myself with the great majority of those trying to get in and failing. It has had a great press, and if you merely want to think about the theatre, instead of going, the reception of this play will give you a subject. It is, even apart from the identity of the producer, the obvious successor to *BROADWAY*—and promises to have as long and satisfactory a life.

Missing that one, I was not compelled to make comparisons in the case of *GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS* which intended to be utterly different, a comedy of newspaper manners, and should either have come first or persuaded the reviewers to forget its predecessor. The best thing about this play is the genuine feeling for character it showed in several of the principal parts. The newspaper men were newspaper men as every cub reporter and every experienced city editor has known them: hard-boiled about other people's important affairs and sentimental about their own trivial ones, easily generous, picking up and discarding all sorts of women, drinking and swearing off, driven by their work and enjoying it and hating it. The actual plot was not so important, but it served to bring on Helen Flint who not only looked very pretty, but played to perfection the type of woman who is intellectually unable to foresee any ending to a conversation except a kiss. So long as she was drifting lightly from one man's arms to another, she held the plot together; but neither the moment when the newspaper man threw up his job as a press agent nor the moment when he chased the vamp out of town to save his own son from her, came entirely out of the characters involved, and the latter had almost nothing to do with the return of the newspaper man to his paper. The colour and the character were both good; but they did not create the plot in which they appeared.

I missed the whole first act of *RINGSIDE*, and three minutes after

¹ *The Front Page*. By Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur. Introduction by Jed Harris. 12mo. 189 pages. Covici, Friede. \$2.

the second act began I was entirely aware of everything that went before. This means that I am an experienced playgoer, or that the authors are remarkably skilful summarizers and indicators of the direction of the play, or that the first act was sheer waste of time. As that act is laid in the training quarters of the pugilist hero, I am willing to bet that a lot of inside stuff was offered, most of it amusing. The second act was devoted to a party in a roof bungalow; either for realism or for lack of ingenuity, this was the dulllest party I have ever attended—that is to say, it was like most parties, only on the stage it lacked the sense of reality. In the midst of it the young boxer is vamped, bribed, and made sick with drink; his honest father rescues him at the last moment. So far *RINGSIDE* was not good.

And then it picked up, and in two sharp scenes became actively exciting. The first scene was excellent melodrama and the second was a good boxing match, with the roar of the loudspeaker all through it and a very good imitation of Graham MacNamee's incapacity to describe a fight coming over. *RINGSIDE*, if you're serious, will add nothing to the American drama; but the last forty minutes may give you an added pulse-beat.

GOIN' HOME is a strange play with something genuine working its way through theatricalities, making itself felt, and then being spoiled. It is the story of an American negro who was in the French Army, married a French girl, and stayed her appetite to be off to America by fantastic tales of his wealth at home. An American captain comes in. It is the negro's master, boyhood companion, and friend—but a Southerner with ideas of racial inequality. He dispels the grandiose illusions the negro has put into his wife's head and then seduces the wife. In the following brawl, a Senegalese, brother in arms of the negro, is about to kill the captain. The negro shoots—and kills the Senegalese. The rest of the play is unimportant.

By theatricality I mean, for example, the French girl's flirtation with the captain the moment she sees him. Obviously, later, she lures him because she is furious with her husband; but the point is dulled by the conventional "all French girls are bad" effect of the beginning. And the theme is spoiled at the end because the third act does not carry on the second. Most of this second act is given

over to a species of vaudeville carried on by American negro soldiers clustering round the great figure of the Senegalese; to me it seemed that they sang and shot craps and danced for their own enjoyment, the only defect in staging being that one dancer faced the audience in the theatre instead of the audience on the stage. This goes on with the captain and the wife off stage together, the cuckold husband knowing nothing of it and being torn by his love for his wife and his yearning to return to America, to be among the black men again, to know the black man's deep laughter. The Senegalese is the key-note of this laughter; it is racial, primitive, terrible, and free. As he falls dying he cries out, "Toi! Esclave!" It was rather unfortunate that this key line had to be spoken in French; but the obvious obligation of the dramatist was to carry it on to his ending. Instead the two men, white and black, try each to shield the other, taking the murder upon himself, and in the end both go free.

This is a prize play, far above the average. It seems to me that Ransom Rideout, the author, worked his theme out dramatically up to a point and then failed to think it out further. Nevertheless, he has indicated power and an indifference to mere slickness; both of which are desirable.

Mr Earl Carroll's *VANITIES*, as far as I am concerned, consist of Frisco and W. C. Fields. Frisco is exactly as he always was, a remarkable example of an entertainer who neither changes nor develops, yet remains among the best. Talent joined with character will sometimes work that way, and by character I mean the capacity to resist imitating others, of remaining incorruptibly one's self. Fields is far more versatile; he has always some surprise for you, and although he appears in some dull and dirty scenes, he himself is always doing a thought-out piece of work; in the good scenes he is most engaging and amusing. Two or three manoeuvres of the chorus and one or two elaborate "conceptions" come off well; the rest positively took me back to the days of my youth, to obscure and second-rate musical shows of 1910. The music I found terrible, the settings uninteresting, the mass display of bodies not particularly well done. Nevertheless, with two stars and a terrific go, the *VANITIES* manage to please vast audiences; and I was more surprised than shocked by the smoking-car jokes.

Concerning the movies: *THE PATRIOT* is as good as the best reports say it is. You easily forget the atrocious attempt to make it a vocal film and you do not forget Jannings or Lubitsch. The talking films so far have been pretty terrible, especially those which attempt drama. No matter what the producers say, you are seeing a movie and hearing a loudspeaker at the same time. Up to this time the directors have sacrificed the movie to the speaker. When they stop doing that, there may be more to say in favour of the novelty. The short subjects are to be listened to without pain and the synchronized news reel is superb. The non-vocal movies seen at the same time were, with the exception of *THE PATRIOT*, as bad as the vocal ones, but less of a strain.

GILBERT SELDES

COMMENT

A LITERARY period would not be a period but for personality which makes it what it is and unaccountable charm can be imparted to it by a single mind—as in the instance of Goldsmith. In his father's home, "an old, half-rustic mansion, . . . overlooking a low tract occasionally flooded by the River Inny," "we were told that universal benevolence was what first cemented society": he says, "we were taught to consider all the wants of mankind as our own." The portrait of Lysippus in *The Bee* is a kind of desperate miniature of Goldsmith, his father, and his Uncle Contarine: "His generosity is such that it prevents a demand, and saves the receiver the trouble and the confusion of a request. His liberality also does not oblige more by its greatness than by his inimitable grace in giving. Sometimes he even distributes his bounties to strangers, and has been known to do good offices to those who professed themselves his enemies." Inclined to regard money lightly—as Goldsmith was—to

. . "press the bashful stranger to his food
And learn the luxury of doing good,"

it is not strange that gallant execution should become on occasion, burlesque, pitifulness or domestic debacle.

Though he quivered under insult, a masqueraded mock melancholy put plumes on desperation and whereas a paraded sense of melancholy is unpersuasive, dejection not induced in the hope of response has the opposite effect, as in the remarks, "When once a man addicts himself to the sciences, or commences author, if he be not of the church, his friends lament him as lost," and "I resemble one of those animals that has been forced from its forest to gratify human curiosity. My earliest wish was to escape unheeded through life; but I have been set up for half-pence, to fret and scamper at the end of my chain." The humility of the apologia for *The Vicar of Wakefield* is the completeness of dignity: "There are an hundred faults in this thing, and an hundred things might be said to prove them beauties. But it is needless. A book may be amusing with

numerous errors, or it may be very dull without a single absurdity. The hero of this piece unites in himself the three greatest characters upon earth; he is a priest, an husbandman, and the father of a family. He is drawn as ready to teach, and ready to obey; as simple in affluence, and majestic in adversity. In this age of opulence and refinement, whom can such a character please?"

Frequently doubting his own product—not that he did not think the thing good, but that he did not think people would think it so—he was freely encomiastic with respect to others and says of Voltaire, "When he was warmed in discourse, . . . it was rapture to hear him. His meager visage seemed insensibly to gather beauty: every muscle in it had meaning," and in dedicating *Mistakes of a Night* to Doctor Johnson: "By inscribing this slight performance to you, I do not mean so much to compliment you as myself. It may do me some honour to inform the public, that I have lived many years in intimacy with you. It may serve the interests of mankind also to inform them, that the greatest wit may be found in a character, without impairing the most unaffected piety."

Nor was respect mere formality. Willingness to sacrifice labour and "in deference to the judgment of a few friends, who think in a particular way," to revise or restore, was not a recollecting that he too could write. To us Doctor Primrose is one of the diamond-set snuff-boxes of the curioso and the "long fight against the deuterogamy of the age" as well as other equally valuable irrelevant plausibilities have lost nothing with time.

Of eighteen of Goldsmith's essays now for the first time reprinted,¹ an especially pleasing one on South American Giants—was occasioned by a book published at Madrid, "a work, entitled *Gigantologia*, by P. Joseph Tarrubias," and the editor's necessity to create pages "for his own perusal" is as unapparent in it as in some of his other more famous unautographed writings. Approving of certain of the giants—a body consisting of about four hundred—he says, "the lowest soldier in the whole army was not under nine feet high; and the tallest was about eleven. Their features were regular, their limbs exactly proportioned; they had a sweetness and affability in their looks, and their speech was deep, clear, and

¹ *New Essays by Oliver Goldsmith, Now First Collected and Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Ronald S. Crane.* 12 mo. 147 pages. Chicago University Press. \$3.

sonorous. . . . They lived in a state of perfect equality among each other, and had people of ordinary stature to do the domestic offices of life."

The plays are plays not essays and the poems are "full of quality" as Professor Saintsbury says, "though not always of strictly poetical quality"; but in Goldsmith a miscellaneous tendency and a hopping, zigzag consistency are oddly expressive of his particular coloured being. Reflecting upon history and climate and race and poverty, and ranting—on paper—against the "hostilities" of a Scotch minuet performed "with a formality that approaches to despondence," we know that he distrusted "all honest jog-trot men who go on smoothly and dully"; but he was not kind to folly and could "wish that he might find men, when employed upon trifles, conscious that they are but trifles." He may have regarded as ephemera, the somewhat monstrous character of the fairy with the train fifteen yards long supported by porcupines, and the blue cat who showed the prince that "his passion for the white mouse was entirely fictitious, and not the genuine complexion of his soul"; but the eclipse of the sinister is always in Goldsmith an inversion of injury. Now a hundred years later, when publishers whose "valuable stock can only bear a winter perusal" and a "muster-master-general, or review of reviews" would admit that he had not employed himself upon trifles, his proffered scepticism, "let folly and dullness join to brand me" seems rather absurd. Avoiding the church and its black vestments by accident as much as by prudent decision, he seems to have been able to "moderate rage" and to have occupied in the world without realizing that he was so doing, a Samaritan and a pastoral office.

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